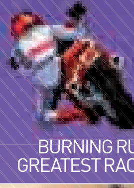
OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

retro GAMER

AMSTRAD | COMMODORE | SEGA | NINTENDO | ATARI | SINCLAIR | NEO-GEO | S… …BILE



ROAD RASH

BURNING RUBBER WITH ONE OF THE GREATEST RACING GAMES OF ALL TIME

THE MAKING OF... DESERT STRIKE

DISCOVER ALL THE SECRETS BEHIND THE CLASSIC 16-BIT CHOPPER FRANCHISE



WWW.RETROGAMER.NET

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK

HOW INDIANA JONES FOUGHT COBRAS AND ANGRY NATIVES ON THE ATARI 2600

BARGAIN HUNT

EVERY GAMES MACHINE LISTED

WANT TO START COLLECTING VINTAGE HARDWARE? CHECK OUT OUR COMPLETE LISTING

THE BIG FEATURE!

FESTIVE SPECIAL

YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE HISTORY OF SEASONAL GAMES, BOTH PAST AND PRESENT

ALL WASHED UP

PHILIP OLIVER

THE FAMOUS TWIN TALKS ABOUT TREASURE ISLAND DIZZY

Fantastic 6-page feature!

NiGHTS™

YUJI NAKA LOOKS BACK AT THE CREATION OF ONE THE SEGA SATURN'S MOST SENSATIONAL GAMES

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

SINCLAIR ZX-81
SPEND SOME PRECIOUS TIME WITH THE ZX SPECTRUM'S LITTLE BROTHER

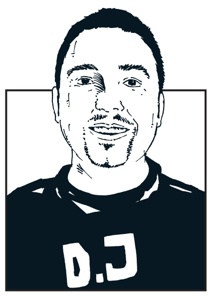
BUGGY BOY
THE ARCADE MEGA SMASH THAT WOWED EVERYONE ON THE COMMODORE 64

SKATE OR DIE
THE SKATEBOARD GAME EVERYONE WAS PLAYING BEFORE TONY HAWK'S

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES
TRAVEL BACK IN TIME TO THE BEGINNING OF 8-BIT GAMING

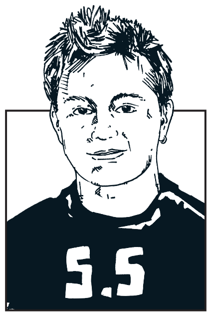
THE RETROBATES

FAVOURITE GAME TO PLAY AT CHRISTMAS



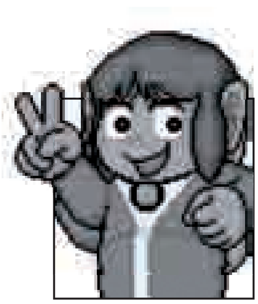
DARRAN JONES

The utterly fantastical *Christmas NiGHTS*. Mainly because when I play it, it gives me a funny feeling inside. I've since been told this is called happiness.
Expertise: Boring people at work about high-definition films
Currently playing:
Eye Of Judgement
Favourite game of all time:
Robotron: 2084



SPANNER

Quest For The Rings on the G7000 arrived down my chimney many years hence, and coupled with the co-operative nature of the game, I find it to be an excellent celebration of this mostly Pagan ritual.
Expertise:
Dragon slaying in January sales
Currently playing:
Christmas NiGHTS
Favourite game of all time:
Maria's Christmas Box



STUART HUNT

No time for games on Christmas day. I'll be contemplating the day's importance and spending the entire day hugging my family, while my dad bangs out a carol on the baby grand. Bliss.
Expertise:
Games with flying bits in them
Currently playing:
Call Of Duty 4
Favourite game of all time:
Call Of Duty 4



DAVID CROOKES

Okay, so it's perhaps not the best game to play at Christmas, but my earliest festive gaming memory was the pack of games that came with my Amstrad CPC. *Supertest, Roland In Time, Toobarooba*… Hmmm.
Expertise: All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, Atari Lynx and PlayStation
Currently playing:
A game I forgot to tell Darran about
Favourite game of all time: *Broken Sword*



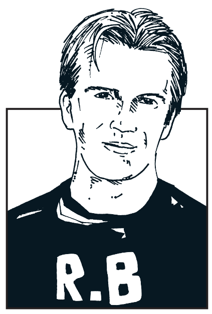
PAUL DRURY

Christmas is for families, so gather your clan round the console for *Warlords, Bishi Bashi Special* and *Wii Sports*. Go granny.
Expertise: Getting programmers to confess their drug habits
Currently playing:
Hot Pixel
Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



CRAIG GRANNELL

The sun-splashed mini-games of *California Games* are a perfect antidote to the UK's dreary winters, and it's still amusing when everyone's had a glass too many at Christmas.
Expertise: Games you don't need 37 fingers to control.
Currently playing:
Juggle the deadlines
Favourite game of all time:
H.E.R.O.



RICHARD BURTON

It's got to be something that brings back your seasonal retro-gaming memories and warm fuzziness. For me that would be Manic Miner closely followed by Pyjamarama…
Expertise:
Spectrum and Amstrad gaming
Currently playing:
18 Wheeler
Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner

LOADING...



Ever since Retro Gamer relaunched you, the reader, have asked us to do a suitably festive cover to celebrate Christmas. It's taken 27 issues, but here it is, and hopefully you'll love it as much as we do.

Sega's *NiGHTS* was one of the Saturn's greatest games and it sported a wondrous separate release called *Christmas NiGHTS*, which was given away free with the UK's official *Sega Saturn Magazine*. It may have only featured two levels from the original game, but by golly did it look incredible. Wreaths had replaced rings, Christmas bells could be found in abundance and a thick layer of snow carpeted the normally green hills of Spring Valley. It's quite possibly one of the greatest Christmas releases of all time and ties in perfectly with our huge Christmas special on page 58.

Keeping in the festive mood there's also an in-depth look at the unofficial Retro Gamer Christmas game, which has been created by Smila and Scottige from Retro Remakes and stars the wonderful Monty Mole.

And then, of course, there's our behind-the-scenes look at Electronic Arts' fantastic *Strike* franchise, the late Douglas Adams' The *Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* and our cover game *NiGHTS Into Dreams*. So, all that's really left to say is have a wonderful Christmas and we'll see you all in the New Year.





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BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO CLASSIC GAMES

NiGHTS: INTO DREAMS



INSIDE

At-a-glance retro sections…



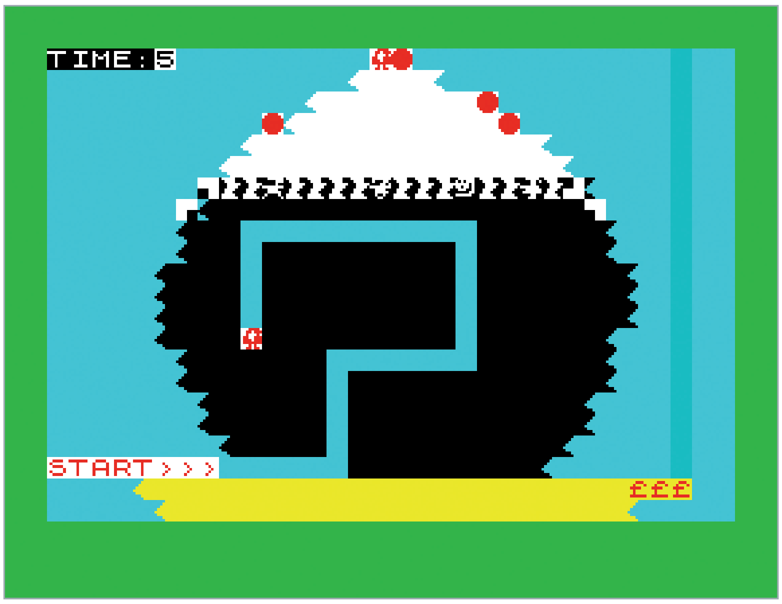




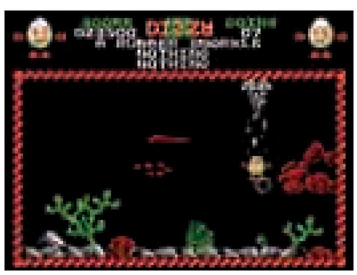
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ESSENTIALS

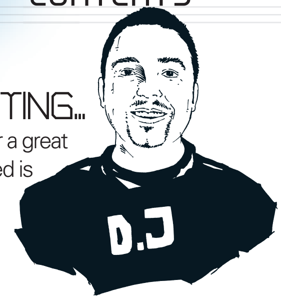
CHRISTMAS SPECIAL



THE MAKING OF…



RETRORATED



THE GAMES LISTING…

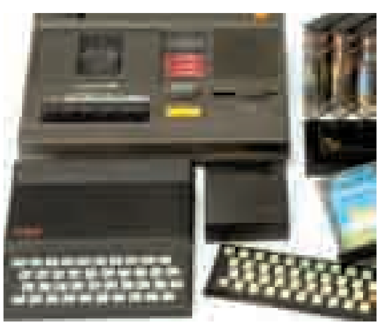
If it's a bumper compilation or a great new remake, then Retro Rated is where you'll find it



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p100



RETROINSPECTION

SINCLAIR ZX81



THE MAKING OF…

THE STRIKE FRANCHISE



THE BIG INTERVIEW

RINGS OF SATURN

THE GUIDE

What's hot this issue…

STREET TALK…

AS A NEW TRAILER IS RELEASED ON THE INTERNET, SPECULATION OVER HOW STREET FIGHTER IV WILL PLAY OUT REACHES FEVER PITCH…



Look how moody it all looks. Ryu looks awesome.



The two ancient foes go face to face. Fans the world over soil themselves with excitement.

There's still no news from Capcom about which direction *Street Fighter IV* will be heading in, but a teaser trailer showing Ryu and Ken fighting it out in a glorious animated battle has recently hit the web. Every punch and movement permeates the air with a dark ink splattering, which had us thinking that Capcom could be opting for something along the lines of *Viewtiful Joe* for its look, and *Mario Paint* for the gameplay. Ryu and Ken don't appear to have aged much since *Third Strike*, so Capcom isn't opting to go all *Metal Gear Solid 4* on us. We're also doubtful that it will remove the superlative parry system, as it's a feature now seen as iconic to the series as many of its wonderfully quirky characters. We sincerely hope that Capcom spoils us by bringing back all of the original fighters from *The World Warrior* and that it's planning to further refine arguably the greatest fighting game ever made.

THE CLUES AND THEORIES

We put our thinking caps on and try to piece together how the game might play out.

Punches and kicks send waves of ink swashing through the air; this could hint at the characters being hand drawn perhaps?

Ryu and Ken haven't aged much so it won't be a *Metal Gear Solid 4*-type affair.

When Ryu charges up his fireball he appears to absorb the background art until he's standing inside a white canvas. Could this be the new literal screen-grabbing look for the supers?

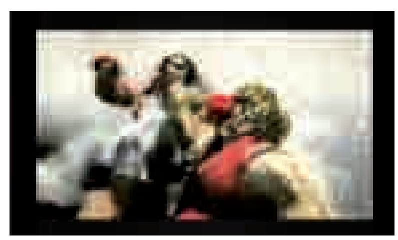
Capcom probably won't go all SNK and opt for an exhaustive line-up, it's not its style. We'll put money on Ryu and Ken (and possibly Chun-Li) being a shoo-in for the game, though.

We reckon it will keep the option to select multiple supers at the beginning of a match.

We'll be surprised if Capcom chooses not to include a huge array of customisation and online options for the game.

Perhaps some Wii Remote, PS3 Sixaxis shoehorned controls – aka *Mortal Kombat: Armageddon* – maybe?

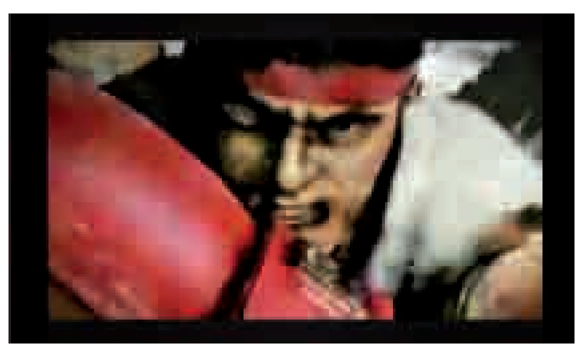
It will be released in the arcades first.



The punches start landing. We need this game NOW!

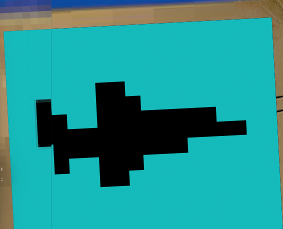


With an evil look Ken prepares to finish off Ryu once and for all.



Ryu's not having any of it though. Just look at the determination in his eyes.

HERO OF THE MONTH



THE HARRIER

Every month, Retro Gamer looks back at a classic videogame hero or heroine. This month it's the turn of *The Harrier* from *Harrier Attack*

First appearance: *Harrier Attack*

Distinguishing features: It's black (unless you're playing the C64 version, of course)

Weapon of choice: Bombs

Most likely to: Hide in the clouds

Least likely to: Break the sound barrier

Interesting fact: *Harrier Attack* was the first game Stuart ever played

LOADING SCREEN OF THE MONTH

NO 29: AFTER BURNER (COMMODORE AMIGA)



The original *After Burner* was an utterly superb arcade game, so you can imagine how excited we were when we saw this loading screen for the first time. All the planes were there, there was a big pilot and it even featured the Sega logo. The conversion was pretty fine as well.

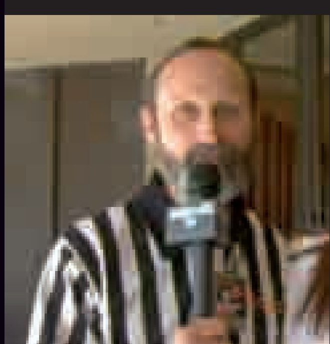
JUST IN A LITTLE BIRD HAS TOLD US THAT KONAMI'S RATHER SPIFFY TWINBEE PSP COLLECTION SHOULD BE ARRIVING IN THE UK VERY SOON. NO NEWS ON THE SALAMANDER PACK BUT WE LIVE IN HOPE…

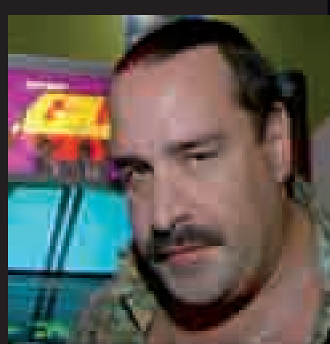
COIN-OP K.O.



Every now and then, we get a nice little surprise through the post. Sometimes it's the latest fanzine CD, while other times it's a new remake or a pack of cool Top Trump cards that someone's painstakingly put together.

This month a copy of *Coin-Op. TV* popped through our letterbox, and, what do you know, it's actually very, very good. Essentially 90 minutes of interviews, with the likes of Walter Day, Todd Rogers, Capcom and Namco, it gives a fascinating insight into the world of high-score chasing and plenty of great anecdotes and information. This new DVD has two never-aired episodes and even has audition tapes of the two lovely hosts. If you're a fan of Eighties coin-ops, then why not head over to www.coin-op.tv where it can be purchased for $19.95.





THE ULTIMATE CHRISTMAS GIFT

STUCK FOR GIFT IDEAS THIS CHRISTMAS? WHY NOT TREAT FRIENDS AND FAMILY TO A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE…

In our minds there's only one thing better than a Retro Gamer subscription on Christmas Day, and that's a copy of our fantastic eMag to unwrap.

Featuring the first 30 issues of the magazine for a staggeringly low £19.99, it's the perfect way to while away a Christmas afternoon and contains a ridiculous amount of classic features to wade through. As well as including virtually every article that had ever seen print in the magazine, there's an exclusive new interview with Martyn Carroll (Retro Gamer's original editor) and Darran Jones, which examines the intricacies of creating a niche magazine on a tight deadline. If that's not enough, there's also a selection of great desktops to enjoy and even the option to create your very own cover.



The Retro Gamer eMag is the perfect present for anyone with an interest in retro gaming and can be ordered direct from our online store at www.imagineshop.co.uk.

FANTASY FINAL? PROBABLY NOT

THE FRANCHISE THAT NEVER DIES GOES BACK TO ITS ROOTS FOR THE HANDHELD MARKET

Talk about taking the proverbial piss; the sore nips of *Final Fantasy* have been milked so much that the games are slowly beginning to resemble episodes of US comedy *Friends*.

We were reasonably happy with Square's last redux, *Final Fantasy Tactics: The War Of The Lions* (save for a questionable cameraman and pig-sluggish controls), and Square seems to be revisiting the old games again with the release of both *Final Fantasy I* and *II* on the PSP. Word is that the first game is more a portable port of the version in *Final Fantasy Origins*, which appeared on the PS1, PSX, PSone or whatever we've all agreed to refer to it as now. Both versions will be released separately and will boast hi-res visuals, new dungeons and lucid cut-scenes, which can be viewed in a brand new gallery. Both of the games have seen a release on the PSP in the US and will reach the UK in the first half of 2008.





If we didn't keep buying them, maybe Square Enix would stop making them. Still, we do love *Final Fantasy*.

LAST-MINUTE NEWS



SNK'S NEW COMPILATION

WORLD HEROES

SNK Playmore has recently announced plans to release *World Heroes Anthology* on to the PS2 in spring 2008. The pack will include *World Heroes, World Heroes 2, World Heroes 2 Jet* and *World Heroes Perfect*. The set has already been released in Japan under the wicked name of *World Heroes Gorgeous*, which we expect to be changed to something more imaginative like *World Heroes Pack*, or *World Heroes Anthology* when it reaches our boring shores. For those eager to get their hands on the game, the original *World Heroes* is available for download on Virtual Console for 900 of your hard earned points.

FROM SMALL SCREEN TO BIG SCREEN

RETRO GAMES HEADING TO THE SILVER SCREEN

No 'Joust Watch' this issue (boo hiss), but instead we have some movie news that could prove equally exciting. The *Castlevania* series is due to be transformed into a $50 million film directed by Sylvain White of *I'll Always Know What You Did Last Summer* fame (we sincerely hope he's played lots of *Castlevania*).

Not much is known about the project at the moment, but Dimension Pictures reputedly dropped the project after concerns regarding the script, which has been scribed by Paul WS Anderson (who most likely wants to set the entire thing underwater or something).

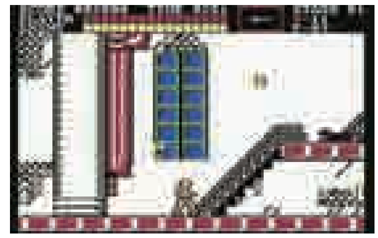


After impressing as Batman, Christian Bale is apparently favourite to play Solid Snake.

The film is apparently going to be a time-warping affair, charting the feud between the Draculas and the Belmonts. *Star Trek*'s Jonathan Frakes is rumoured to be attached to the film, and we'll be sure to 'bat' back any news that 'flaps' our way (scoff). In our minds, the departure of Anderson can only be a good thing.

Also, not sure how much 'substance' this rumour holds, but during a recent interview Christian Bale supposedly mentioned that he is in the running to play Solid Snake in the upcoming *Metal Gear* movie. Cripes! Here at **Retro Gamer** we think Kurt Russell would have been the perfect choice to don a pirate patch and take on the part, but judging by what Hideo Kojima had to say about the film, the plot may centre around a young Snake.

"It's going to be a Hollywood film," said Kojima. "Viggo Mortensen would make a perfect Snake, but maybe he's a little too old. *Metal Gear Solid* was set in Alaska and so would make a perfect setting for the movie."



No, this isn't a snap from the incoming movie, it's from an actual *Castlevania* game. Can you guess which one?

Further news has also emerged on the seemingly canned *Halo* film adaptation. Peter Jackson's representative, Ken Kamins, recently spoke to *Vanity* stating that a *Halo* film could still be on the cards and Microsoft is already in talks with other distribution projects to continue the film's development.

Most of the pre-production work is being carried out at its visual effects studios, Weta Digital and Weta Workshop, in New Zealand, and it looks highly likely that Neill Blomkamp will still direct.

"Everybody is supremely confident in Neill," Kamins said. "Part of what excited Peter and Fran was Neill's vision. We're very confident this film will move forward with the creative partners intact, who will take the film to production."

VILLAIN OF THE MONTH



SHADOW THE HEDGEHOG

VILLAIN OF THE MONTH

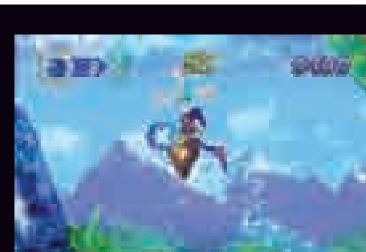
Without bad villains there would be no good heroes. What would Batman be without the Joker? What would Mario be without Bowser? Complete rubbish, that's what. This month: Shadow the Hedgehog

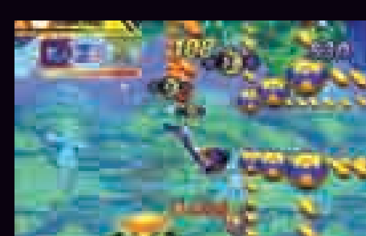
First appearance: *Sonic Adventure 2*
Distinguishing features: Jerk features
Weapon of choice: Being a jerk
Most Likely to: Act like a jerk
Least likely to: Not be a jerk
Unusual fact: He's a jerk

NEW NiGHTS

SEGA'S CLASSIC IS BEING REMADE

Just as we were going to print, Sega of Japan made an announcement that has made us so happy, we're considering renaming our first born to Sega. Maybe it's fate (what with this issue featuring a making-of on the original game), maybe it's sheer luck, or maybe Sega just wants to make some easy money. Regardless, *NiGHTS Into Dreams* is the next big Sega Ages announcement and we couldn't be happier. While little information has been released by Sega at this moment in time, we're guessing that it's going to be extremely similar to previous releases. Therefore, you can expect a perfect port (fingers crossed) of the Saturn original, and a funky new version (that we''ll never play) that ups the polygon count and messes around with the formula that worked so well in the first place. Please forgive our cynical little rant, though; in all honesty, we're extremely excited about Sega's latest announcement and we've already approached Sega's PR and demanded that *NiGHTS Into Dreams* gets released in the UK. Of course, we've been demanding that the same thing should happen to *Panzer Dragoon Saga* and that's constantly fallen on deaf ears. Who knows, though? Maybe someone at Sega will actually listen to us.





NiGHTS on the cover, *NiGHTS* in the mag, a new *NiGHTS* game and now a *NiGHTS* remake. This is the best month ever!

THE GALLERY

WHEN WE ASKED STUART WHAT HE WANTED TO BASE THIS MONTH'S GALLERY ON, HE SAID GAMES THAT BEGIN WITH 'Z'. WE'RE NOT SURE WHY, HE'S A BIT STRANGE LIKE THAT



Zoo Keeper
Released 1982
Featured Artwork American
Does it sell the game?
Sure does, what with its great Luigi doppelgänger, Zeke. Despite pretty much displaying all the elements of the game in cool Hanna-Barbera fashion, to the non-*Zoo Keeper* learned the flyer doesn't really give too much away about the game – only that you play a zoo keeper who catches lions with a crabbing net in front of circus animals that run up prison walls.
What's cool about it?
The rhino is wearing a red tracksuit, that's pretty much it really.
What's naff about it?
Nothing, you couldn't really improve on the artwork – well, maybe you could add a giraffe or two in a leather jacket?



Zaxxon
Released 1982
Featured Artwork American
Does it sell the game?
This flyer either represents the most boring arcade in the world, or the artist's attempt to instil an iconic *Space Invaders* regimented foreboding, showing a menacing robotic army of bleeping squawks and flashing hypnotic screens poised to take over the world's arcade market. What the 'BURN IN' sign means is anyone's guess; spelt backwards it says 'NIN RUB', which could be pillow talk for 'Buy Me'?
What's cool about it?
The colour-bleached look of the picture is very Eighties sci-fi.
What's naff about it?
It could give the impression that the cab is so unpopular that somewhere in the world exists a warehouse rammed with poor, unsold *Zaxxon* cabs.



Zoar
Released 1982
Featured Artwork American
Does it sell the game?
In its 12th week at the Forum Fair in Arlington, *Zoar* proved more popular than *Wacko* and *Baby Pac-Man*. Don't believe us? Grab a magnifying glass and read the figures on the large scroll held up by the scientist. According to the picture, most of *Pole Position*'s earnings that week came from the Hunchback Of Notre Dame who, given that he can't see over the steering wheel, probably thought he was driving to work that week.
What's cool about it?
It's so confident that it laughs in the face of colouring-in.
What's naff about it?
It looks like one of those dreary advice pamphlets you find in doctors' waiting rooms.



Zing Zing Zip
Released 1992
Featured Artwork Japan
Does it sell the game?
Zing Zing Zip is quite a neat little wacky shoot-'em-up. In it you can jump into the cockpit of a pink air hostess (grow up), control a guy born with an arse on his chin and clean up the skies with a pink mop with an egg for a nose (those wacky guys at Tecmo, eh?). Now if they'd only included a sweating zombie with an Elvis quiff it would have completed the perfect quartet.
What's cool about it?
Well, apart from the name, the artwork looks great, a nice balance of action-packed screenshots and arse-faced protagonists.
What's naff about it?
Staring at it long enough could end up giving you Manga-headaches.



Zombie Revenge
Released 1999
Featured Artwork Europe
Does it sell the game?
This game was so good that even the undead were trying to get their hands on it. You could imagine that it'd be pointless for the dead to rise up from their graves for the sole purpose of playing an arcade game about decaying ghouls. That would be like a taxi driver playing *Crazy Taxi*, a giant robot playing *Virtual On: Oratorio Tangram*, or even a plumber playing *Super Mario Bros*.
What's cool about it?
The surrealism of it; Sega's colourful Naomi cab is being touched up by a gang of green hands.
What's naff about it?
The green hands look lame as.

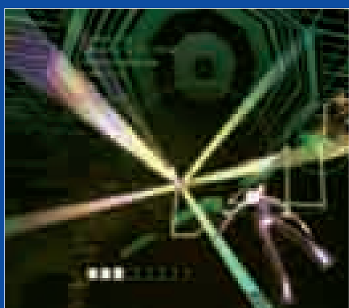


Zarzon
Released 1981
Featured Artwork American
Does it sell the game?
It certainly soaks it in mystery. It does use some ridiculous bait to grab your attention though: 'They came as Rockets' (surely they came with Rockets). 'They came as meteorites' (they were surrounded in meteorites, or maybe even lived in meteorites would be closer to the truth). They came as dragonflies (dragonflies are a few inches long and not even remotely menacing).
What's cool about it?
The *Zarzon* logo drips post modernism.
What's naff about it?
It doesn't tell you how well it did on its 12th week of location at the Forum Fair in Arlington.

RETRO GAMER DIARY

THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO...

Just because **Retro Gamer** looks to the past, that doesn't mean there aren't any games and events to look forward to. Every month we'll be listing suitable games and events for you to add to your 'to do' list



JANUARY 08

REZ

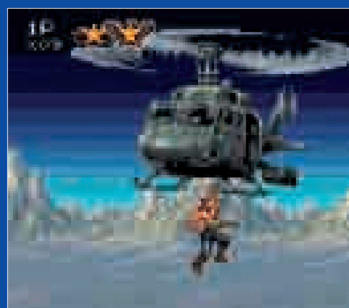
Released: January

Publisher: Q Entertainment

Price: 1200 Points

Format: Xbox Live Arcade

It's a little known fact that Sega's *Rez* is one of the greatest games ever made. Originally released on Sega's Dreamcast, it's a beautiful fusion of mesmerising sound and abstract visuals and is quite unlike any other on-rails shooter. Anyway, it's now been announced for Xbox Live Arcade so with any luck a brand new generation of gamers will be able to discover this fantastic title.



JANUARY 08

CONTRA 4

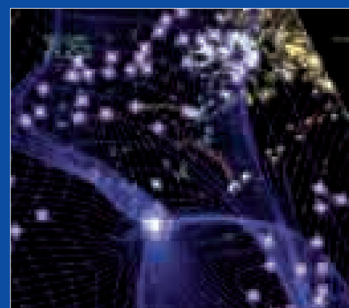
Released: January

Publisher: Konami

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

Few things get us excited here at **Retro Gamer** towers, but a new *Contra* is usually able to do the trick and this latest offering from Konami is looking very slick indeed. Appearing to be a homage to previous games in the franchise, this is already looking like a classic blaster and a worthy follow up to the classic SNES hit (we like to pretend that the later versions never happened).



JANUARY 08

GEOMETRY WARS: GALAXIES

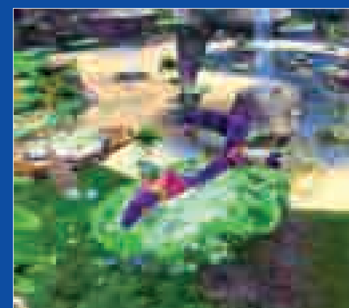
Released: 25 January

Publisher: Sierra Entertainment

Price: £29.99 – £39.99

Format: Wii, DS

It's not often that we admit to being wrong, but it's become blatantly obvious to us that the Xbox Live version of *Geometry Wars* was actually far better than *Bankshot Billiards 2*. Anyway, now that's off our chests, we can start getting hyped for the impromptu sequel, which features more levels, more visuals and well… more everything really.



JANUARY 08

NiGHTS: JOURNEY OF DREAMS

Released: 25 January

Publisher: Sega

Price: £49.99

Format: Wii

Put your hands up if you thought Sega would mess up *NiGHTS*? Quite a few of you, eh? Worry not, after an in-depth play, we can safely confirm that *NiGHTS'* latest outing not only captures the brilliance of the first game, but may be even better. Sega has a lot resting on *Journey Of Dreams*; from what we've seen there's nothing to worry about.



FEBRUARY 08

NEW INTERNATIONAL TRACK & FIELD

Released: 22 February

Publisher: Konami

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

Sumo Digital is certainly into its sports games at the moment. As well as working on *Sega Superstars Tennis*, it's also putting the finishing touches to this re-imagining of Konami's classic sports franchise. Seeing a super-deformed Pyramid Head from the *Silent Hill* series has already turned a few heads, so let's see what other characters are announced in the coming months.



FEBRUARY 08

SEGA SUPERSTARS TENNIS

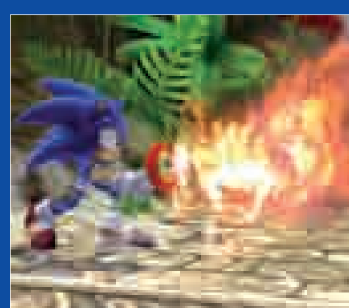
Released: 29 February

Publisher: Sega

Price: £29.99 – £49.99

Format: PS2, Wii, 360, PS3, DS

Once upon a time Capcom was dominating our diary and earning all our love, but now that love has been transferred to Sega. *Sega Superstars Tennis* looks set to include a host of characters ranging from Sonic, to some of the charming primates from *Super Monkey Ball*. Best of all though is the return of *Space Channel 5*'s Ulala. Up, down, up, down, serve, serve, serve.



MARCH 08

SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE

Released: March

Publisher: Nintendo

Price: £39.99

Format: Wii

Yes, it is frustrating that the damn thing keeps getting pushed back, but it's hard to complain when the end result could well be the most comprehensive battler ever. The latest news from the *Super Smash Bros* grapevine is that Diddy Kong and Sonic are now playable characters and it will include a level select with a brand new level being available for download each day.



MARCH 08

SEGA BASS FISHING

Released: 23 March (US)

Publisher: Sega

Price: £39.99

Format: Wii

While there's little doubt that a fishing game will work perfectly on the Wii, we can't help but wonder why Sega is bothering with a bass game. After all, everyone knows that the bass is the most boring of fishes, isn't as smart as a perch and lacks the killer instinct of a pike. Worst of all they became really arrogant after the original arcade game was such a hit and are apparently already making ridiculous demands. Stupid fish.

THE RETRO FORUM

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – WWW.RETROGAMER.NET



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STAR LETTER!

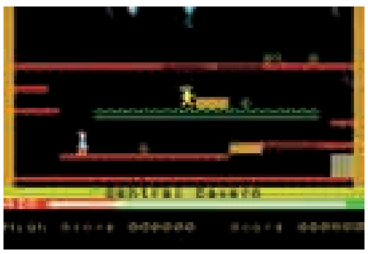
TIME FOR A CHANGE?

Dear Retro Gamer,
I've noticed for quite a while now that if there's one thing your reader's can't decide on it's the actual definition of what constitutes a retro game. While many readers state that they only consider the 8-bit machines to be true retro machines and that they refuse to read other articles, this makes me sad. There are always plenty of cracking articles in the magazine, and while I may not have an interest in every game and system I would never turn the other cheek and ignore a perfectly good piece because it was a game/system I didn't like.

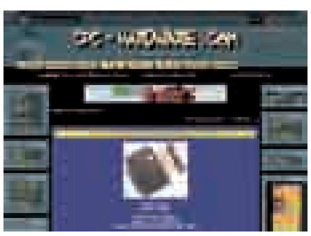
I don't mean to single out 8-bit fans (I'm one myself), but it's normally them that tend to make the most noise. I don't care at all for 8-bit and 16-bit systems, I simply prefer to enjoy the best of both worlds and I wish everyone else could as well.

Dean Pointon, via email

You're quite right, it shouldn't be about the systems, or when they came out, it should be about celebrating classic games. Granted, there are always going to be some who prefer one generation of systems to another, but hey, the world would be boring if we were all the same.



» Who would have thought the classic 8-bit games like *Manic Miner* could cause so much trouble…



» CPC-Hardware.com: A great resource for all things Amstrad and CPC related.

I, ROBOT

Dear Retro Gamer,
I've just started to re-amass my CPC collection after my dad cleared out his attic and gave it all back to me, but there is one item I've always been interested in owning and that is the Multiface Two by Romantic Robot. It was a fantastic device that let you store whatever is in the memory so you didn't have to play through hours of game just to get to the bit you were at last time. I've searched nearly every Google page and every version of eBay looking for one and now I don't know where to turn. Do you or any of the masses out there, in their infinite wisdom, know where I can get one? PS I would pay dearly, ie cut your grass or paint your fence for you.

Yours frustratedly,
Dave, Ipswich

Sorry Dave, but we were going to suggest eBay as well. There are, however, a fair few dedicated Amstrad websites around so why not sign on to these sites and see if they can help you out. We'd recommend French site CPC-Hardware.com as they have an article about the actual interface. Alternatively, one of our readers may have the answer you're looking for.



EVERY MONTH ONE lucky reader will receive an extremely trendy **Retro Gamer** T-shirt (thankfully, not one worn by Darran) and a snazzy new **Retro Gamer** binder. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words in it will go down just as well…

ROBO-CON

Dear Retro Gamer,
It's rare that I feel the urge to write to anybody, but after I read your run-'n'-gun article in issue 44 I felt compelled to write in to you. First of all where is *Commando*? It was a landmark addition to the genre (some would argue that it started it) and yet it doesn't make the top 25.

Then there's the fact that *Robotron* has somehow made second place, despite it being a shoot-'em-up. I suspect it's to do with the fact that it's one of Darran's favourite games and not because it was actually deserving of its position. I can't comment on your number one choice, as I've never played it, but I can't imagine that it's better than the brilliant *Super Contra III*, which just about managed to scrape into the top five.

Yours disappointedly
David Cooper, Leeds

We thought long and hard about Commando, *David, we really did. However, as good as it was, there were simply better choices in the same vein, (*Ikari Warriors, Mercs*) that we felt were more deserving of a position. As for your comments about* Robotron. *Yes, it's true that it's Darran's favourite game, but that had no influence on its actual placing. Despite its confines, all you do is run and gun, so we felt it was more suitable here than in a top 25 shoot-'em-up article. And what do you mean you've not played* Sin And Punishment*? Go and buy it NOW!*

SPECTRUM FEVER

Dear Retro Gamer,
I'd just like to say that I've recently discovered your magazine and was wondering when you planned to write anything about the ZX Spectrum? It's one of the most important 8-bit computers of all time and I've lost count of the many hours that I used to spend playing *Sabre Wulf*, *Head Over Heels* and other classics. Is there any chance that you will be doing an in-depth look into the machine any time soon as it really is a national institution.

Gareth Turner via email



» Capcom's *Commando*. A great game to be sure, but not quite got enough to get into our top 25 run-'n'-gun games.

We're ever so sorry Gareth, but the Spectrum version was covered all the way back in issue 19. While the issue has long since sold out, you could always pick up the **RG** *eMag from our online shop. You're not the first reader to write in and ask for more*

FROM THE FORUM

EVERY MONTH, RETRO GAMER WILL BE ASKING A QUESTION ON THE FORUM AND PRINTING THE BEST REPLIES. THIS MONTH WE WANTED TO KNOW YOUR PLANS FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

ID: LeeT
As I'm not expecting to get a PS3, I'll be just eating loads of choccies and watching whatever repeats are on telly.

ID: MRMIdAS
Play games. Pub. Chrimbo din-dins. Play games. Grunt at elderly relatives. Drink beer. Drunken gaming sesh.

ID: Smurph
I will be hoping that Santa brings me the Vectrex I've wanted since I first played one… Then drowning my sorrows with copious amounts of alcohol when I'm disappointed, as usual. It's a Christmas tradition!

ID: bolda
Is this a genuine "From The Forum" question Darran, or are you just looking for an invite to Christmas dinner?

ID: jimbo_too
Probably visit my family, call my girlfriend, have beer and fall asleep in front of a *Bond* movie.

ID: beanz
Probably retire last year's Christmas presents and replace them with this year's, SOCKS.

ID: Dark Reaper
Probably spending a day in the cells again after I get caught trying to sneak down people's chimneys while dressed as Santa Claus! I tend to get a bit overexcited at Christmas, no matter how many of those special pills they give me!

ID: nwosteve
Absolutely nothing. Don't get much time off work so I'm putting my feet up. Have a good one!

ID: elmosexwhistle
I'll visit my parents. I'll wear boy's clothes and drink gin with my dad, who has no idea I want to wear pretty frocks.

ID: backdrifter
Christmas NiGHTS. Obviously.

Spectrum coverage, so it's entirely possible that we'll revisit the machine – albeit from a different angle – in the future.

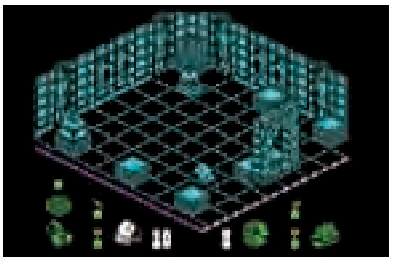
WHERE'S WIL

Dear Retro Gamer,
I've been buying your magazine ever since I spied issue 20 in my local Smiths and I have one question to ask you. What on earth has happened to Wil Overton's amazing artwork?

In the past 24 issues you've only featured three of his covers, while I've lost count of the number of Oliver Frey ones. I can appreciate that Wil is probably a busy man and that these pieces of art can't be knocked together overnight, but could you tell him to please pull his finger out of his bum, as I'm itching to put his next masterpiece on my wall.

Yours impatiently,
Dan Thomas, Bristol

You're right Dan, Wil Overton is a very busy man indeed (it's all those secret Rare games he refuses to tell us about). We're sure you'll see a lot more of him and his artwork in future issues, but recent collaborations have been rather tricky to pull off, and a few ideas we've had have fallen through due to lack of time, unfortunately. Rest assured though, we love Wil's art just as much as you do and we aim to be featuring something brand new from him very, very soon.



» Gareth Turner wants to see more coverage on the ZX Spectrum. Does anyone else?

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Collector's Corner



RETRO GAMER'S READERSHIP IS FULL OF PASSIONATE COLLECTORS, SO IT'S HIGH TIME WE STARTED COVERING THEM. THIS MONTH WE SPEAK TO JIM EINARSON WHO HAS AMASSED AN IMPRESSIVE HANDHELD COLLECTION WITH HIS STEPSON MARTIN

Retro Gamer: How long have you been interested in gaming?
Jim Einarson: My interest in gaming started in the arcades, and I poured endless quarters into *Pac-Man, Asteroids, Tempest, Crystal Castles* and many, many others over the years. Since then I've probably owned every videogame system released in North America, except the Philips CD-i and the Amiga CD32. Martin's been playing videogames since he was old enough to hold a controller.

RG: And when did you first start collecting?
JE: I started collecting when I was single, but sold my systems before the kids arrived. We all enjoy videogames, and we've always had game systems around the house, but we didn't start collecting handhelds until recently, when Martin did a research paper on the history of home videogame consoles for school and discovered Gunpei Yokoi.



» Some of the nicer pieces from our WonderSwan collection. This collection grew substantially after the excellent Retroinspection article in issue 36.

RG: So why focus on handheld consoles?
JE: I've always loved gaming on the go. I'm a gadget freak, and I love the technology used in creating portable systems, from a hardware and software perspective, and Martin's definitely inherited that fascination with the machines. It's also relatively inexpensive to get involved in handheld collecting at the moment. I think the collector's markets have yet to fully catch up with handhelds, and with the exception of the Nintendo Game & Watch systems we've had good luck tracking down games and machines at reasonable prices, for the most part.

RG: What's your most expensive handheld?
JE: I suppose our four Sony PSPs (three originals and a Slim) represent a sizeable investment in gaming technology, but of the retro systems, my NOS TurboExpress was probably the most costly. My system had the infamous 'sound problem' from manufacture, so it was never sold originally and languished in a warehouse for years. Between the original purchase price and the cost of having the four capacitors on the PCB replaced to fix the sound issue, it ended up costing roughly the price of a brand new PSP, with a game or two besides.

RG: What's your favourite handheld and why?
JE: It's hard to choose just one, but the TurboExpress holds a powerful nostalgic sway over me. I was completely in love with the system when it was first released back in 1990, and games like *Splatterhouse*, *Ninja Spirit* and *Devil's Crush* are as much fun today as they ever were.

Martin: I'd have to go with the Game Boy Color because I've probably spent more hours playing on it than on any other system, mostly playing *Pokémon* games in their various colours. The *Zelda* games like *Link's Awakening* and *Oracle Of Ages/Seasons* are really fun, too.

RG: So who designed your mural?
JE: The wall unit that houses our collection is a product of the artistic talents of my wife Chantal and our daughter, Annie. Martin and I wanted some shelves to display our burgeoning collection and bought



» **Inset:** The first cartridge-based handheld videogame system, the Milton Bradley Microvision. This machine still gets a lot of play, nearly 30 years after its release. *Block Buster* is the favourite game, by far.



» A close-up of our melamine games shelf.



» Atari Lynx I and Lynx II – I have a strong nostalgic attachment to my original Lynx. It's one of the few systems I keep packed away for personal use.

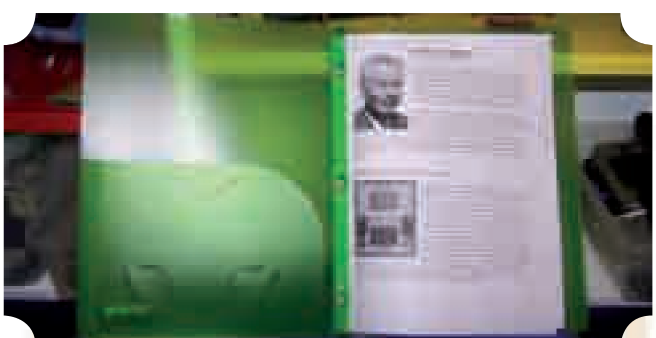
an old bit of office furniture on the cheap. We pulled it apart in the garage and that's when Chantal and Annie jumped in with the idea of brightening it up a bit by using primary colours for the shelves and painting characters and logos from various game franchises on it. We just let them do what they wanted and I think it's great.

RG: Do you collect systems other than handhelds?
JE: We don't actually 'collect' anything other than handhelds, but we have an Xbox, a PS2, two Dreamcasts, a GameCube and a Turbografx-16 hooked up to various televisions around the house.

RG: What's the rarest handheld that you own?
JE: Nothing we own is really all that rare. The Milton Bradley Microvision would probably be considered the 'rarest' system we have, because so few of them have survived in working condition. The Game Boy Light isn't all that common either, as it was a Japan-only Game Boy model that was manufactured for only a year.

RG: What advice would you give to someone interested in getting into handheld collecting?
JE: I think it's a fantastic way to get into game collecting without investing a large amount of money or living space to the hobby. Some of the systems we have, like the original GameKing or the smaller, 'Mark 2' edition of the Neo Geo Pocket Color can be a little tricky to find, but the really obscure machines are things like the Gamate and the Epoch Pokékon Pocket Gaming Computer. The latter was released only in Japan in limited quantities, and commands a tidy sum. Another real challenge would be to try and collect all the various hardware versions of the Supervision console.

RG: Do you have many Game & Watch titles?
JE: We only have three Game & Watch titles right now. We added them to our collection as 'examples' of Gunpei Yokoi's early work and to show how contemporary handhelds clearly 'evolved' from his designs. The three we have are all quite fun in their way, but Martin and I did have quite a laugh playing competitive *Donkey Kong Hockey* when it first arrived in the post.



» The 'guide book' that Martin and I put together with information about all the systems we have on display.

RG: Where do you normally purchase systems from and have you ever found a bargain?
JE: Some of these systems were originally purchased as new back when they were contemporary, others were found locally and some have been purchased on eBay. As for bargains, I've also discovered that dealing with Japanese sellers via eBay, or directly, can net some nice systems and games at surprising prices.

RG: How much would you say your collection is worth?
JE: I have no idea what it would actually be 'worth' if we were to sell everything off, but I would guess that we've spent maybe $5,000 over the past few years on these systems and games. Certainly, the collection represents a sizeable investment in terms of our entertainment budget, but we all get considerable pleasure from it.

RG: Do you actually play with the systems you collect, or do you prefer to hoard?
JE: Virtually all our systems are on display, and all of them have batteries and games loaded in them so you can pick up and play them whenever the urge strikes. Anyone who comes to our home is welcome to play any of the systems at any time – that's what they were designed for, after all – and I get a kick watching Martin and his friends play games on hardware that was designed before he was born. I like to think that leaving the collection out to be handled and played is a way of respecting the hard work and vision of all the people like Jay Smith, Gunpei Yokoi, Dave Needle, RJ Mical and so many others who invested time and effort into developing these systems for us to enjoy.

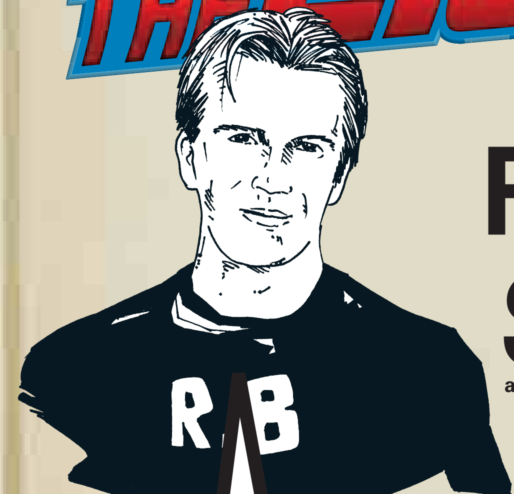
RG: Is there anything you're still looking for?
JE: The Gamate is something we're actively looking for right now, and I'd like to add an Epoch Pokékon Pocket Gaming Computer to the collection before we're done. Games we're looking for include *Masaimura* (WonderSwan), *Air Zonk* (TE) and *Lemmings* (Lynx).

RG: What does your wife/significant other think of your hobby?
JE: My wife is very supportive of all our foolishness, including our videogame collecting. She's a gamer in her own right: she's through several *Pokémon* games, for instance, as well as a number of other RPGs such as *Lunar*, *Breath Of Fire* and *Final Fantasy.* While she painted the shelving unit she did recommend its current location at the bottom of the basement stairs as an alternative to somewhere in the living room.

If you have a collection that you feel the rest of **Retro Gamer**'s readership needs to know about then please contact us at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk and we'll do our best to get you in the magazine.



BACK TO THE EIGHTIES



THE LATEST NEWS FROM JANUARY 1984

January 1984 – Software Projects goes hard, Sir Clive takes a Quantum Leap, Oric finally gets a bit of Atmos, Amstrad sees PC, C64 goes portable, Shaky gets hi-tech and Your Spectrum goes byte high, no limit. Richard Burton pokes around…

Software Projects, most famous for its Matthew Smith connections, announced it would be adding to its range by starting a new company dealing solely with peripherals and add-ons called Hardware Projects.

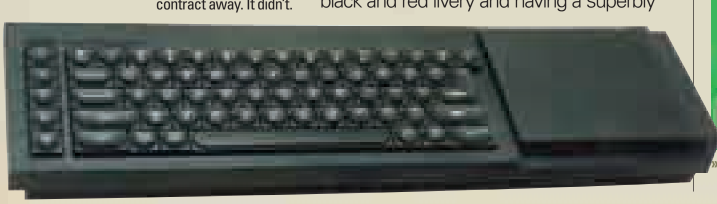
The first product was already in development, a joystick interface amplifier for the Spectrum, albeit at the early prototype stage. This was the brainchild of Keith Archer, of Hardware Projects, who was formerly employed by 8-bit peripheral kings Fuller who were less than pleased by his defection. Fuller's managing director stated that "writs would be flying about" if any of its ideas were found at Hardware Projects. As it turned out, Hardware Projects never got further than the prototype stage itself.

There were many hardware projects that did take off this month. The first preview units of Sir Clive Sinclair's newest baby, the QL, reached magazines, ensuring reviews throughout the month, although the official release was expected to be the end of February. The £399 machine, featuring twin microdrives for storage, was targeted at the serious home user as well as the business end of the market.

However, there was a bigger target in Sinclair's sights… the BBC. Acorn's contract to supply BBC's computers was up for renewal in the summer and Sinclair, who missed out the first time when touting the Spectrum as the new BBC Micro, would return to the table with its new QL to attempt to capture Acorn's lucrative contract.

Oric Products, after a demanding few months, appears to have turned the corner with the launch of its new machine, the Oric Atmos. Decked out in a rather fetching black and red livery and having a superbly responsive typewriter-style keyboard, the Atmos looked very smart. The £170 price tag was not such good value compared to other similar machines and the software base was still somewhat lacklustre.

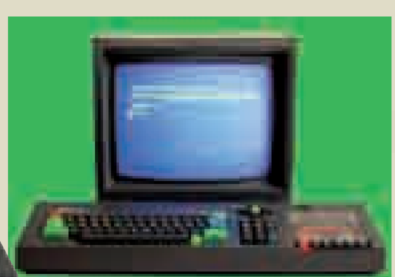

» Oric's second computer was a design triumph. Just a shame there wasn't more software oomph to back it up.


» The QL was going to supposedly challenge Acorn by prising its lucrative BBC Micro contract away. It didn't.

Amstrad, purveyor of cheap hi-fis, revealed it was busy preparing its own new computer for an expected April launch. The CPC 464 would have a built-in tape deck and come complete with a choice of green or colour monitor priced at £249 and £359 respectively.

For C64 owners wanting to play games on the move, why not purchase the Commodore SX-64, essentially a portable C64 with a built-in five-inch colour screen. Announced in January 1983 and released a year later, the SX-64 weighed in with a hefty $995 price tag and an even heftier 23lbs in bulk. If nothing else, it would keep you toned as well as light of pocket. Still, it holds the honour of being the world's first portable colour computer – even if it wasn't actually that portable at all.

CRL revealed it had signed a deal to reproduce the classic HG Wells book *The War Of The Worlds* into an adventure game. The Spectrum version would be the first to be released, sometime during the summer, with most 8-bit machines getting a conversion a bit later in the year. Meanwhile, Imagine Software churned out another two games for the Spectrum, *Alchemist* and *Stonkers*. *Alchemist* was described as a real-time adventure, while *Stonkers* was a tactical war simulation.


» The Amstrad CPC 464 – possibly the best home computer ever invented, ever. Yes, even better than the Jupiter Ace…


» The 'portable' Commodore SX-64. Lucky really, as it'd be handy in hospital with all the hernia's you'd get.

Mirrorsoft released its first two titles after announcing its arrival on the software scene a few months previous. Its debut releases were both educational titles, *Caesar The Cat* for the C64 and the *Mr Men* for the BBC.

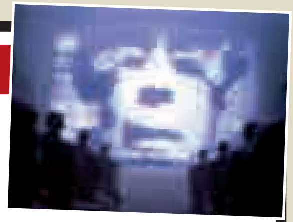
Atari's latest release for the 2600 was *Moon Patrol*, a clone of the minor arcade hit, *Moon Buggy*. Price? A wallet-denting £29.99. Now, if that seems a lot for one game maybe this new selection of titles for the Atari 2600 might be more down your boulevard.

Goliath Electronics of, the then, West Germany, released 24 titles for the 2600 at the even more eye-popping price of £6.95 each. Some of the titles featured included *Astro Attack*, *Sea Monster* and the curious hybrid game *Pac Kong*. Although the price seemed incredibly good, the games themselves weren't anything special.



» *Caesar The Cat* (C64): Mirrorsoft's harmless, non-threatening, non-violent first game. Where are the bazookas? No grenades?

1984



» Ridley Scott directed it and it was shown during the half-time show of the Super Bowl. No, not a Cillit Bang advert…

27 January saw Burns Night arrive belatedly for Michael Jackson, he of the shape-shifting face, as he received hospital treatment for serious burns to his head after he managed to set his hair on fire during a film shoot for a Pepsi Cola advert.

The moon-walking megastar was performing *Billie Jean* in front of an audience of 3,000 fans when a pyrotechnic special effect showered him with sparks causing his hair to become alight. He was taken to a hospital in Los Angeles, where he was treated for second-degree burns. Ow! Cha'mone MF…

The Apple Macintosh computer was introduced to the world on 22 January with a famous television advertisement (directed by Ridley Scott), shown during the Super Bowl, which was heavily influenced by George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* novel.

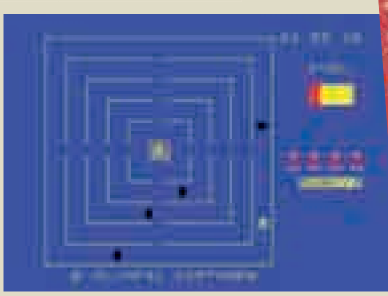


» Michael's face was never the same after the hair-on-fire incident.

The Macintosh itself was certainly radical in design, being one of the first computers to use a GUI (Graphical User Interface) with any degree of success.

The Mac, as it became known, was released two days later on 24 January and was on sale to the public for $2,495. That hefty price would also include all the signatures of Apple's design team moulded into the inside of the Mac's casing.

Finally, on 20 January Johnny Weissmuller, the Olympic swimmer and star of 12 *Tarzan* films during the Thirties and Forties, died aged 79. Ongawa!



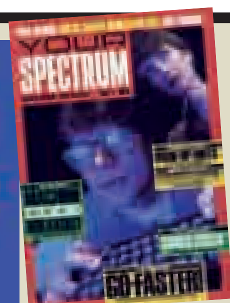
» *The Shaky Game* (Spectrum): It was free with Shaky's new album and for a very good reason, it was crap.

For ColecoVision owners gagging to play 2600 games on their console without the need for a hacksaw and soldering iron, there was good news. The ColecoVision expansion module arrived in the UK and sold for £59.99.

Shakin' Stevens, the wobbly legged rockabilly Elvis impersonator from the Eighties, managed a strange crossover into the world of computer games when his new album, *The Bop Won't Stop*, had a Spectrum file tucked away on it. After further investigation it was found to be *The Shaky Game*, a game of type-in quality that contained some entertainment value. It was rubbish and a blatant gimmick… and the game was pretty bad, too…

After one issue, multiformat mag *Personal Computer Games* moved from being a quarterly to bi-monthly. It must've done well in those first two issues as from February's third issue it would become a monthly read.

The biggest magazine arrival this month was *Your Spectrum*. With a finely balanced menu of technical, hardware and gaming articles, it proved to be a firm favourite among Speccy users. Of course, that could all change with the release of the first issue of *Crash* just around the corner. I bet *Crash* wouldn't resort to overtly cheesy ads featuring a Spectrum and a topless lady!

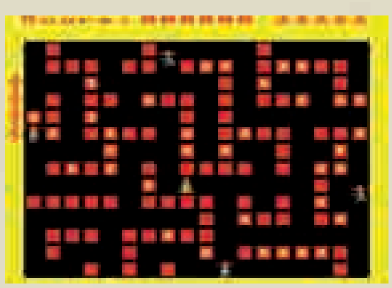


» The mag that gave you Hacker's Guides with loads of *JSW* pokes and Byte High, No Limit. Lovely.

C&VG awarded its Game Of The Month award to *International Soccer* (Commodore, C64), with *Bug Diver* (Galactic Software, Dragon 32), *Arcadia* (Imagine, C64) and *Saloon Sally* (Psion, BBC) all fighting for the scraps.

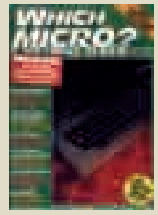
Issue 4 of *Commodore User* kept tabs on *Attack Of The Mutant Camels* (Llamasoft), *Balloon Rescue* (Alligata Software), *Hustler* (Bubble Bus) and *Blue Moon* (Merlin Software).

Your Computer weighed in with a 275-page monster in January. Not bad for 80p! Among the advertisements, for there were many, were reviews covering *Tutankhamen* (Micromania, Spectrum), *Laser Snaker* (Poppysoft, Spectrum) and *Crazy Caveman* (Merlin Software, C64).



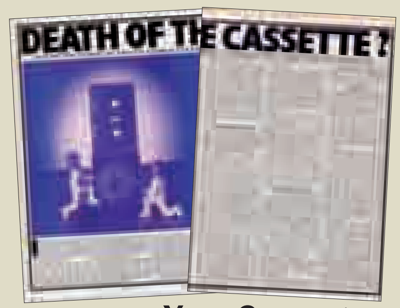
» *Saloon Sally* (BBC): Psion Software's game sees a woman throwing tables and chairs at blokes. No change there then…

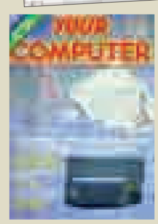
THIS MONTH IN…



Which Micro & Software Review

The magazine contained some interesting features this month, including a review of the Memotech MTX500, a feature on software copiers and an article on the 'Death of the Cassette', claiming tape was on its way out and the future could be downloading games via Ceefax or Oracle.





Your Computer

Your Computer took a look at the makers of the new Elan Enterprise computer, a machine that never really faired that well despite being of good spec and sound mind. It also seems to have inspired the livery colours for Amstrad's forthcoming CPC 464 machine. Not sure about the built-in joystick mind…





Sinclair User

SU's User Of The Month featured a Methodist minister and how he kept records of his parishioners on a Spectrum database. He also wrote his sermons on it. Sadly, "Thou shall not suffer RAM-pack wobble during a game of *3D Monster Maze*" is still recognised as one of the Ten Commandments…



CHARTS

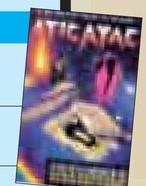
JAN 1984

ATARI 2600



1. Pole Position (Atari)
2. Dig Dug (Atari)
3. Enduro (Activision)
4. Battlezone (Atari)
5. Phoenix (Atari)

SPECTRUM



1. Atic Atac (Ultimate)
2. The Pyramid (Fantasy)
3. Kong (Ocean)
4. Ant Attack (Quicksilva)
5. Lunar Jetman (Ultimate)

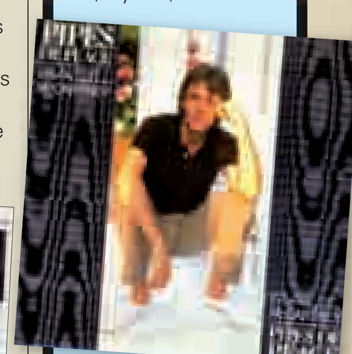
COMMODORE 64



1. Hover Bovver (Llamasoft)
2. Motor Mania (Alligata)
3. Attack Of The Mutant Camels (Llamasoft)
4. Grandmaster (Audiogenic)
5. Matrix (Llamasoft)

MUSIC SINGLES CHART JAN '84

1. Pipes Of Peace (Paul McCartney)
2. What Is Love (Howard Jones)
3. Relax (Frankie Goes To Hollywood)
4. Marguerita Time (Status Quo)
5. Tell Her About It (Billy Joel)

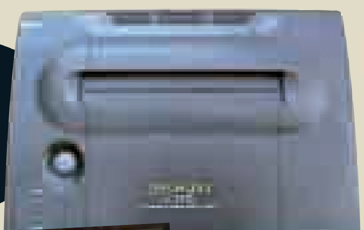


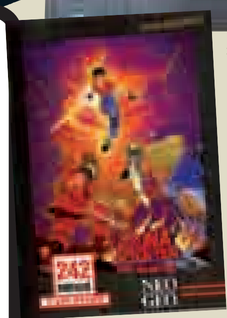
BACK TO THE ~~EIGHTIES~~ 90s

THE LATEST NEWS FROM APRIL 1990



April 1990 – the Neo Geo is go, the GX4000 is a no no, Manic Miner is resurrected, Rick Dangerous is too hard and Encore makes its debut. All this, and Iron Maiden, too. Richard Burton gets amped and spanks his plank…



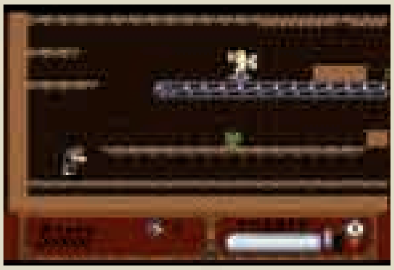


» The magnificent Neo Geo console with the 242 Meg cartridge, *Kizuna Encounter*. That would cost nearer $12,000 than £120 though.

Japanese gaming giant SNK revealed plans to release a new console, first in Japan and later in the US and Europe. The machine would be called the Neo Geo AES (Advanced Entertainment System).

The previous year SNK delved into the arcade market with its new MVS (Multi Video System) format. The new AES console allowed for the exact same arcade games played on the MVS arcade machines to be played in the comfort of your living room due to the capacity of the cartridges. You could even swap memory cards between the two formats.

The AES was expected to cost £300, with the games being an eye-popping £120. That might seem almost suicidal in the cut-throat world of videogames, but with early cartridges having memory capacities up to 330 Mbits, you can understand the costs involved. When you consider many Mega Drive games were just 4 Mbits, you can grasp what the Neo Geo games were capable of.



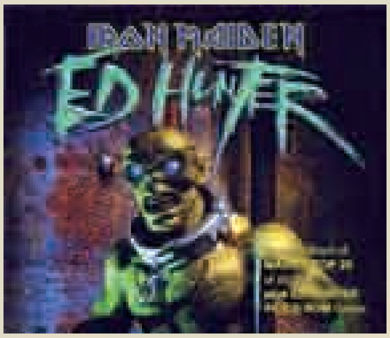
» *Manic Miner* (Amiga): You get two games for the price of one – a C64 port and a graphically enhanced scrolly cavern version.

News of another new console that was more likely to put you to sleep than give you morning glory was the Amstrad GX4000. It would be based around Amstrad's CPC machines and would cost about £100. However, it was likely to be several months away from being available. Amstrad was also planning to release updated versions of its home computers, the new CPC Plus range. These would be CPCs in a new retooled case with the bonus of a slot for cartridge games.

Proving that you can't keep an old dog down, the Atari ST and Amiga got conversions of Software Project's *Manic Miner*. Both came complete with a familiar-looking ported version from an 8-bit machine and an enhanced *Manic Miner II* featuring speech, bonuses and scrolling caverns. It was all yours for just £9.99.

Mindscape revealed some interesting new licensing agreements with news it had acquired licences to develop games based on the movie characters of Mad Max and Dirty Harry. The deal let Mindscape move away from existing plotlines involving the characters and develop brand new ones just for games. It also obtained the licence to *Days Of Thunder*, the new movie starring Tom Cruise. All three games were in development and were expected for a summer release. Other companies delving into celluloid territory for gaming inspiration were Imageworks with *Back To The Future II*, and Ocean who had been developing two games based on the Clive Barker movie *Nightbreed*.

Heavy metallers Iron Maiden revealed plans for a computer game based on Eddie, their skeletal mascot, as part of the bands tenth anniversary celebrations. Several software houses were fighting over the licence, including the usual suspects: US Gold, Ocean, Gremlin and Mindscape to name a few.



» *Ed Hunter* (PC): The original concept for an Iron Maiden game died a slow death. Nine years later though, this arrived…

Unfortunately, the proposed game never saw the light of day although a mere nine years later Iron Maiden released *Ed Hunter*, a three-CD pack containing a first-person shooter PC game and two CDs of music.

Elite Systems introduced its Encore budget range to the Amiga, ST and PC with the release of its first two titles. The classic coin-op conversion *Ikari Warriors* and the not-so-classic *Battleships* would cost £9.99.

Rick Dangerous is now not so tough – thanks to a new release of the game by Core Design. The original game was deemed to be one of the hardest platform games created because progressing through the brick-hard later levels was annoyingly frustrating and almost impossible. The new *Rick Dangerous* game allowed you to start on any level, although starting on the later ones with a view to finishing the game negates the chance of seeing the final glorious end sequence.

The new version could be obtained by returning your original disk to the makers with £4.99 for a copy of the more player-friendly version. Also, for those who couldn't get enough of Mr Dangerous, Core Design was developing a sequel that was expected to be completed in six months time.

Gordon's alive! Yes, he is. Flash, alongside the Phantom, Mandrake and Lothar form the Defenders Of The Earth attempting to



» Is it me or does Amstrad's GX4000 console look a little bit like a snowspeeder from *The Empire Strikes Back*? Just me then…

1990

APRIL NEWS



» After initial problems with Hubble, it worked superbly – thanks in no small part to the multiple spacewalks by astronauts fixing the mirror.

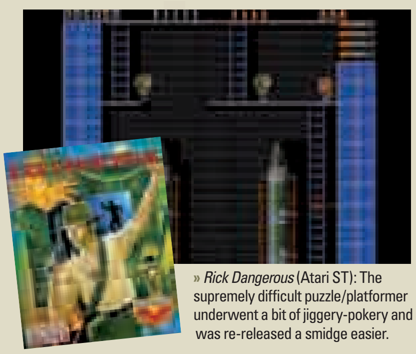
1 April saw rioting inmates take control of Strangeways Prison in Manchester. The Victorian-built prison succumbed to 1,000 prisoners running riot in what was thought to be a protest regarding conditions inside the prison and its overcrowding. The inmates set fire to several parts of the prison and encamped themselves on the prison roof for 25 days. Around 200 inmates and prison staff were injured during the riots with two fatalities. The damage to Strangeways itself was so bad that they had to rebuild the prison, at a cost of £55 million. The prison was later renamed HMP Manchester.



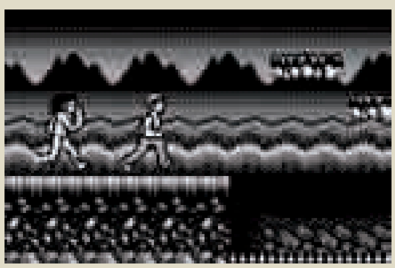
» Is it a magical entrance to Disneyland or a German castle? No, it's Strangeways prison. No Space Mountain for you then…

24 April finally saw the Space Shuttle Discovery take off from Florida with the new Hubble Space Telescope on board. The telescope, which cost over $1.5 billion and was dogged by problems throughout its development, began receiving its first pictures of the universe in May 1990. Unfortunately, a problem with the telescope's mirror meant that the images appeared blurred.

Cause? The surface of the mirror was found to be too flat. Three and half years later the telescope was repaired in orbit with the addition of corrective mirrors attached to the telescope. From that point on Hubble sent back some of the most amazing space imagery ever seen.



» *Rick Dangerous* (Atari ST): The supremely difficult puzzle/platformer underwent a bit of jiggery-pokery and was re-released a smidge easier.



» *Dracula* (Game Boy): This nice little side-scrolling adventure game has more than a whiff of *Mario* about it.

thwart Ming The Merciless's latest dastardly plan. The Saturday morning cartoon series had just been turned into a game, developed by Enigma Variations, and it would be available for most 8 and 16-bit systems in three months. Now, when are they going to make a *Captain Caveman* game? Huh, huh?

Two eagerly awaited releases for PC gamers were Origin/Mindscape's *Ultima VI: The False Prophet* and Mirrorsoft/FTL's *Dungeon Master.* Psygnosis released a cracking shoot-'em-up in the form of *Anarchy* for the ST, while US Gold announced its football game *Italy 1990* was ready for release in time for the upcoming World Cup. Would it be better than the disgraceful *World Cup Carnival* it released for the 1986 World Cup? Don't hold your breath…



» *Defenders Of The Earth* (Amiga): Flash and friends take on the Minging one in this cartoon conversion. It was okay…

Also hoping to cash in on the festival of football was Goliath Games with *Subbuteo,* Addictive with a revamp of the prehistoric *Football Manager,* cunningly titled, *Football Manager: World Cup Edition, Gary Lineker's Hot-Shot!* by Gremlin and *World Cup Soccer: Italia '90* by Virgin/Mastertronic.

ACE gave its Ace Rated stamp of approval to *Gravity* (Imageworks, Atari ST), *Knights Of Legend* (Origin/Mindscape, PC), *Player Manager* (Anco, Atari ST) and *Vendetta* (System 3, C64).

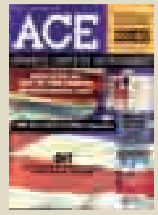
Zero thrust its Zero Hero status upon one sole recipient, *Knights Of The Crystallion* (US Gold, Amiga) with its Console Classic going to *Golden Axe* (Sega, Mega Drive) and *Dracula* (Imagesoft/Nintendo, Game Boy).

The Games Machine gave its TGM Star Player award to *E-Motion* (US Gold, Amiga/Atari ST/C64), *Fourth Dimension* (Hewson, C64), *Crackdown* (US Gold/Capcom, Atari ST) and *Warhead* (Activision, Amiga). It also gave a TGM award to *Hammerfist* (Activision, Amiga/C64/Spectrum) and, bizarrely, to the elusive Konix Multisystem version.

Zzap!64 freely off-loaded its Sizzlers to *Crackdown* (US Gold, Amiga/C64), *Pipe Mania* (Empire, Amiga/C64) and *Warhead* (Activision, Amiga). Its top prize of a Gold Medal went to *Midwinter* (Rainbird, Amiga).

THIS MONTH IN…

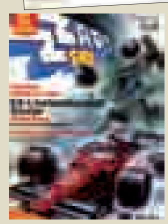
ACE



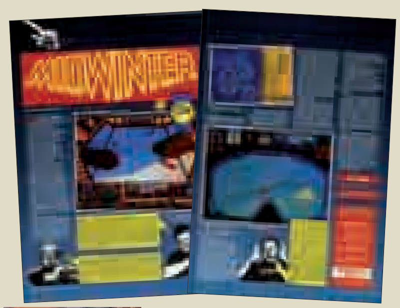
ACE hopped across the pond to take a look inside Electronic Arts and what it was currently developing. *Centurion: Defender Of Rome*, as it happened, which turned out to be a terrific game. It also interviewed Rob Hubbard, the music maestro, who had started working for EA the previous year. He eventually left in 2002.



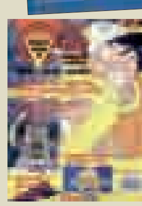
ZZAP!64



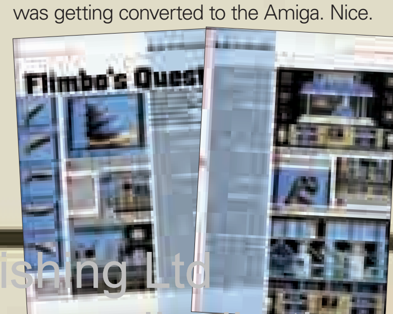
The reviewers at *Zzap!64* were literally duffing in their keks with the release of *Midwinter* by Rainbird for the Amiga. Giving the game 97% overall and awarding a Gold Medal as the month's top game, they obviously felt very strongly about it. Thing is, was the gameplay really that good?



THE ONE



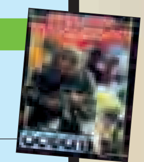
The One regularly featured some great articles entitled 'Work in Progress' highlighting games that were still under development. One of the games featured this month was System 3's colourful platform game *Flimbo's Quest*, which was originally released on the C64 but was getting converted to the Amiga. Nice.



CHARTS

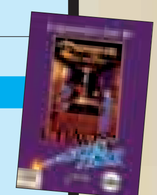
APRIL 1990

AMIGA



1 Operation Thunderbolt (Ocean)
2 Fighter Bomber (Activision)
3 Ninja Warrior (Virgin)
4 Double Dragon II (Virgin)
5 Cabal (Ocean)

ATARI ST



1 Chaos Strikes Back (FTL/Mirrorsoft)
2 Operation Thunderbolt (Ocean)
3 Ninja Warriors (Virgin)
4 Player Manager (Anco)
5 Fighter Bomber (Activision)

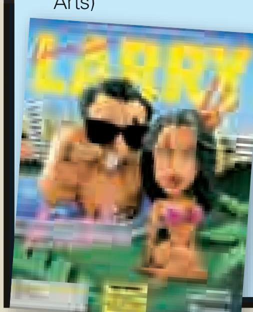
SPECTRUM



1 Fantasy World Dizzy (Codemasters)
2 Paperboy (Encore)
3 Chase HQ (Ocean)
4 Ghosts 'N Goblins (Encore)
5 Turbo Outrun (US Gold)

PC

1 Leisure Suit Larry 3 (Sierra)
2 Chessmaster 2100 (CDS)
3 Ghostbusters II (Activision)
4 Indianapolis 500 (Electronic Arts)
5 Populous (Electronic Arts)



BUGGY BOY

IF ONLY ALL RACING GAMES WERE LIKE THIS



- » **PUBLISHER:** ELITE
- » **RELEASED:** 1987
- » **GENRE:** RACER
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** C64
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £2+



HISTORY

Isn't it amazing what you can do with technology? When *Buggy Boy* was first announced for the 8-bit systems few could have guessed that Elite's coders would be able to successfully capture the spirit of the original arcade game so perfectly.

Capture it they did though, and while there were plenty of solid conversions of the Tatsumi coin-op (we've fond memories of the Amiga outing), Dave Thomas's Commodore 64 conversion was arguably the best. Sticking two fat fingers up at its peers, C64 *Buggy Boy* was quite simply brilliant and an amazing time waster for a wet and miserable day. Spread across five courses, with each consisting of several lengthy checkpoints, you were required to do little more than race to the finish line as quickly as possible.

Here's the catch though – you only had a limited amount of time to complete each checkpoint, and considering the number of hazards on each track, this was far from easy. Tree logs, boulders and water hazards were just a few of the obstacles to get in your buggy's way, and it took real skill and ingenuity to complete some of the later courses.

Fortunately, by passing through certain gates it was possible to increase your time by a small increment, while other gates awarded you with extra points. The devilishly designed tracks, however, meant that only the most skilled (or bravest) players would attempt to collect everything, while the balanced difficulty curve meant you were always returning for one more go.

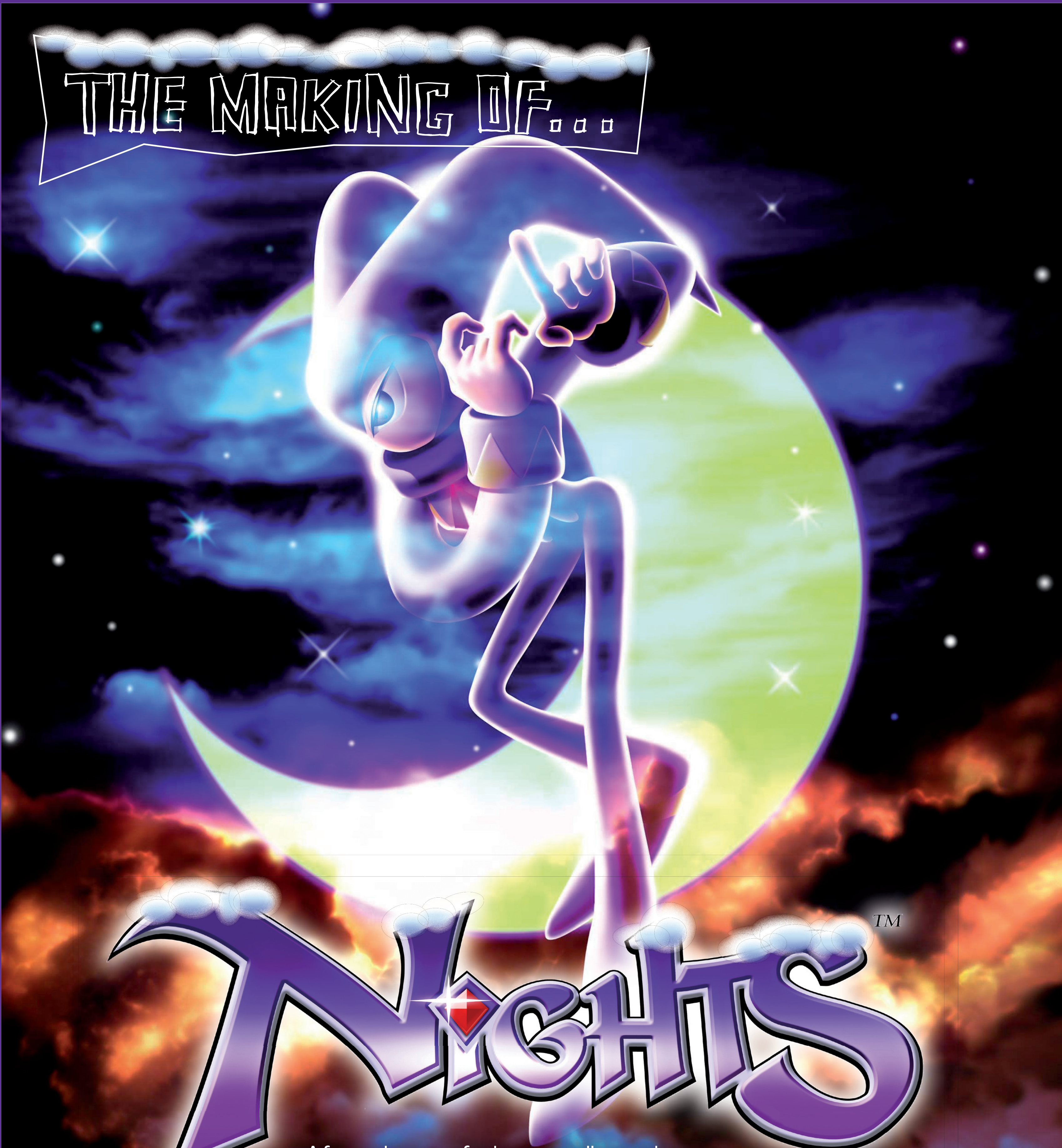
It may not have been able to replicate the panoramic three-screen view of the arcade original, but there was no denying that the C64 port was a delight on the eyes. Bold, bright and chunky, and running at the sort of speed that had Spectrum and CPC owners looking on in envy, C64 *Buggy Boy* was an impressive beast that proved there was plenty of life in Commodore's beige box.




1
2
3
4
5
SCORE
06570
140 KPH
LO
HI

THE MAKING OF...

NiGHTS™



After plenty of phone calls and spam-levels of gushing emails, Stuart Hunt and Darran Jones hook up a sleep monitor to NiGHTS creator Yuji Naka and lead game designer Takashi Izuka, and delve into the creation of one of the greatest Sega games of all time



» Once a round is completed you'll be judged on your score. Yes, we're rubbish.



» *NiGHTS* is such a beautiful-looking game that when we play it we feel all funny inside.

Most dreams would struggle to translate well into a videogame. For those gifted few blessed with the power of actually being able to remember what it is they fantasise about during a night's slumber, fragmented images of work, having babies or the loss of teeth often occupy their subconscious.

For schoolchildren Elliot and Claris, however, dreams continually involve a bountiful world of pirouetting jesters and giant alarm clocks. Dreams that we suspect must be the result of cheese-loving parents forcing upon them a continual and questionable diet of Camembert on toast, grated Parmesan over cornflakes and Babybels dunked into conjugating warm milk.

1996 saw a period that would have us rethinking the way we looked at game genres. Nintendo would take 2D platformers to another dizzying dimension with *Mario 64* and, after a peculiarly low-key debut, Lara Croft finally found her natural home on the Sony PlayStation.

Meanwhile, the Sega Saturn had been surviving on a diet of wonderfully accurate arcade ports and superlative 2D imports. Sega had bolstered its machine's popularity with the help of a few new and exclusive IPs – most notably *Panzer Dragoon* and Treasure's wonderful 2D hack-'n'-slash classic *Guardian Heroes*. But it still lacked something spectacular, something unique, something blue and spikey.

Yuji Naka, formerly of AM8, was selected to spearhead a new hand-picked development team made up of six people: three programmers (including Naka himself), two artists and one lead game designer (Takashi Izuka). By the time *NiGHTS* was finished the team had swelled to 20. AM8 had previously delivered Sega an armament against the might of *Zelda* with *Phantasy Star* for the Sega Master System, and followed up with a platform game to stand up to the potent combo of a new console from Nintendo and the creativity of Shigeru Miyamoto.

Sonic The Hedgehog is arguably the single most important title in Sega's lineage. It was a title that helped relight the fuse underneath Mega Drive sales. It not only made massive strides in platform gaming but, thanks to its exhilarating sense of speed, also had an influence over other genres as well.

Instead of taking in the lush, bountiful stages that his team had constructed, Naka created a platform game that essentially asked players to whiz past their work and reach the end of each stage as quickly as possible. Loaded with ramps and springs, jumps and loops, the levels would continually project you forward at a dizzying pace. This sensation and gameplay had never been seen before, not even in racing games – a genre supposedly built on generating this whole feeling.

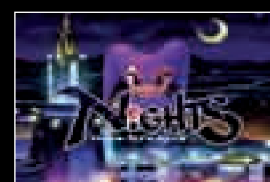
For this reason, *NiGHTS* is inexplicably the creation of Naka. It's undoubtedly another tweaking of the platform and racing genre. You could even argue that it represents a refinement of *Sonic The Hedgehog* itself – there are certainly similarities that can be drawn: the look of the jesters with their giant eclipsing-eyes and aerodynamic heads, and the adrenaline-provoking gameplay. Both games ask you to dart through their beautiful worlds and register their lavish detail using the subconscious cortex of your brain, while all the time retaining an accessible, tactile nature to their controls and gameplay.

"Including the game design and whole story, it took about two years to

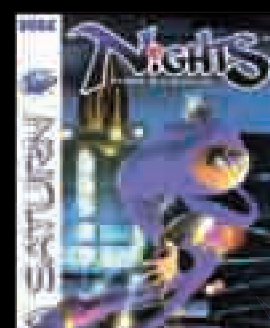
» Defeating the many varied bosses often requires a little lateral thinking and a great deal of skill.



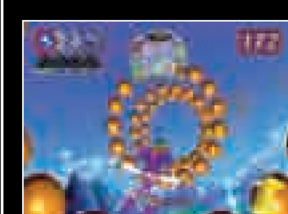
IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
» **DEVELOPER:** SONIC TEAM
» **RELEASED:** 1996
» **GENRE:** PLATFORMER/RACER
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £10+



THE CAMEOS OF NIGHTS



» It looks corny, but there's something quite liberating about throwing out your arms and pretending to fly through giant rings.

While it's taken a good ten years for Sega to get around to making a new *NiGHTS* game, the loveable jester hasn't actually been absent from our TV screens.

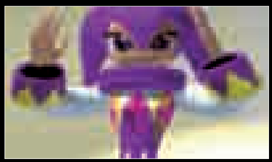
The cute little fella has appeared in a number of cameos over the years, and while many of them are of the 'blink and you'll miss him' variety, he's popped up enough times in other titles to ensure that he's always there in the back of our minds.

As well as being one of the hatchable eggs (along with Sonic) in the GameCube's *Billy Hatcher And The Giant Egg*, the purple-clad hero has also featured on pinball tables in both *Sonic Pinball Party* and *Sonic Adventure*, and there was even a short version of *NiGHTS* for the Game Boy Advance that could be downloaded from *Phantasy Star Online* and the aforementioned *Billy Hatcher And The Giant Egg*. Our favourite NiGHTS cameo, however, is the superb flying mini-game that can be found in the EyeToy title *Sega SuperStars*. Standing in front of your TV screen with your arms outstretched, it's possible to actually control NiGHTS as he flies through the air. Okay, so you look a bit funny while you're doing it, but when you love *NiGHTS* as much as we do you'll do anything for a cheap fix. Even if it means utter humiliation when your friends walk in.

THE MAKING OF... NiGHTS

AS CLEAR AS NIGHT AND DAY?

When you're working on tight deadlines and have to achieve a million and one things at once it's perhaps inevitable that small discrepancies will slip into your final product. Surely though, a development team would be savvy enough to know when something doesn't look quite right on their new hero? Nevertheless, this is exactly what happened when Sega finally released its exciting new game. "I'm not really sure what you'll think of this," begins Takashi rather sheepishly, "but did you ever notice that NiGHTS has different coloured sleeves in the FMV and the actual game? The yellow and purple colours are actually opposite. We didn't find out about it until we released the game in Japan. Our original plan was for him to have the colour that's in the game (yellow triangle). However the image of NiGHTS in the FMV became far more popular than the actual in-game one, so we decided to stick with the purple triangle for the sequel *Journey Of Dreams*."



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

BURNING RANGERS
SYSTEM: SEGA SATURN
YEAR: 1998

RISTAR (PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: GAME GEAR, MEGA DRIVE, NINTENDO WII
YEAR: 1995

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG
SYSTEMS: MEGA DRIVE, GAME GEAR, MASTER SYSTEM
YEAR: 1991



finalise," explains Izuka. "We had a lot of problems throughout development. You can't imagine how many times we had to rebuild the Spring Valley stage. Trying to lock down the rule of blue chip collecting and breaking the Mare Capture was a pain – we tried so many rules. Because there was no similar game for us to use for reference, we had to create everything from scratch."

Sadly, while Lara and Mario had leapt into a wave of success, *NiGHTS* would be appreciated by a staunch few who realised immediately how sublime the game really was and the gravitas of a new title coming from the Sonic Team stable. But sadly, the feminine and cute look of *NiGHTS*, and the colourful and tranquil world of Nightopia did nothing to entice the new breed of gamer that Sony had harvested.

As well as etching out a new market for itself, Sony had also eaten heavily into Sega's share of the market by targeting its new console towards a similarly mature consumer. The sight of a character in tights jumping and twirling around the screen with the grace of a ballerina would do nothing to drag them away from the foreboding corridors of *Resident Evil* and the girl-powered lady lumps of Lara Croft.



» The Mystic Forest in all its dark and mysterious glory.

But for those who were lucky enough to pick up a Saturn control pad and test the water with *NiGHTS*, the payoff was something truly spectacular. It cannot be pigeonholed into any one genre. It's a testament to the game's originality that makes it incomparable to any other game, other than *Sonic*, of course.

When Naka reveals where he found inspiration for the look of the NiGHTS a painfully obvious penny drops. "*NiGHTS* has been inspired by various titles and characters. Personally, I think that it was inspired by my very favourite show, Cirque Du Soleil's *Mystere*."

Looking at the game's many wonderfully flamboyant stages, the energetic animation and sweeping movements in the game with this in mind, it becomes an easy association to realise. The sense of agility in the game, soaring through mesmerising patterns, the hoop jumping and bunting explosions meant that being at the circus was exactly how the game felt.

"Yuji Naka wanted to produce a 'Flightless Bird' game from the very beginning," reveals Izuka. "The concept was if you do your best your dreams will come true, even flightless birds can fly in the sky. We had long discussions and came up with the idea of NiGHTS who can fly, and two characters, Elliot and Claris, who can't fly."

Naka adds, "Since *NiGHTS* was created to impress as many people as possible, we researched a lot of colours and meanings of things, using different methods and settling with the dream diagnosis. I remember crying when checking the movies. I've developed many games, but *NiGHTS* was the first and last time that I was moved by my own game."

Of course, the game's sense of freedom and control would be nothing without a brilliant control system. The interest that the peculiar N64 spaceship control pad had garnered, and the wondrous things it could be seen to add to *Mario 64* was proof of that fact alone. Naka realised that while the Saturn's robust and rigid control pad proved to be a perfect fighting instrument, it didn't really lend itself particularly well to the graceful gameplay of *NiGHTS*. So the team began work on a custom control pad with an analogue nub to allow for unparalleled precision. And the first person to ever get a handle on it would be someone very special.

"The analogue pad was a must have item in terms of having the players experience the feeling of flying in the air. Also, this might be a secret, but the first person who touched the trial version of the analogue pad was Steven Spielberg, when he visited Sega and I did a presentation of *NiGHTS*," Naka recalls.

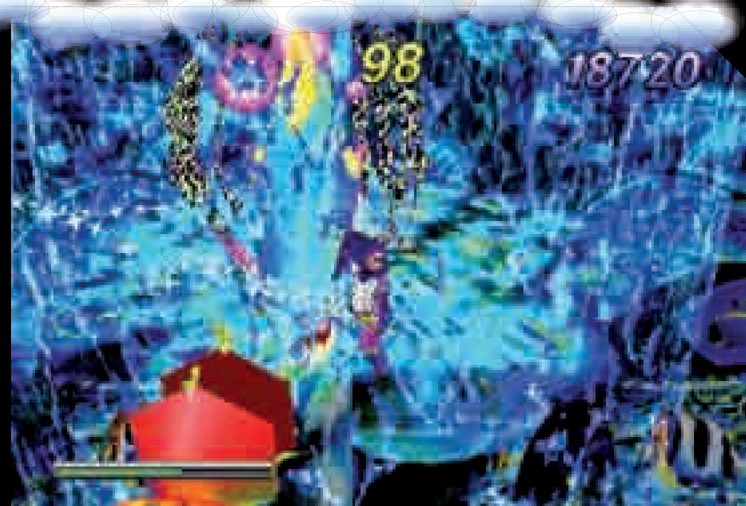
> "BECAUSE THERE WAS NO SIMILAR GAME FOR US TO USE FOR REFERENCE, WE HAD TO CREATE EVERYTHING FROM SCRATCH"
> IZUKA ON THE INITIAL PROBLEMS THE TEAM FACED WHEN DEVELOPING NIGHTS

» Certain sections of Frozen Bell sees NiGHTS turning into a temporary toboggan.





» It's not all side-on flying in *NiGHTS*, as this view from above proves. You'll normally use this mode to navigate small mazes.



» It's quite tricky attacking this boss, mainly because you have to launch yourself at him at the correct time.

The sense of fluidity the analogue controls added brought the player even closer to the game, involving them in ways that had previously never been seen before, and allowed for wonderful sensations mirroring those exhilarating sections in *Sonic The Hedgehog*. But it would be a factor that Naka and his team would struggle to perfect.

"Expressing the feeling of flying in the air and the creation of a totally new system was very challenging; it required a lot of trial and error," he says. "The intention was to have the players feel synchronised and reflect itself to the playing character. This is the reason why we tested quite a lot of different patterns, and I remember narrowing them down."

Perhaps the most peculiar aspect about *NiGHTS* is the way the game exhaustingly switches from two dimensions to three dimensions. Claris and Elliott, in their normal state, are free to roam their wonderfully flourishing 3D world. In their 'normal' state they must avoid the menacing trundle of a giant stalking alarm clock and can intermingle with the game's wonderfully angelic-looking Nightopians: the game's subtle A-Life system. While it is a well-known fact that the Sega Saturn struggled within three-dimensional worlds, Naka's vision for the game would soon dampen his hesitance to pull the game out of two dimensions.

"At the beginning we thought that developing in full 3D would be very difficult," admits Naka. "However, in midstream we started to think that it might be possible and started to experiment. The result was great and that is what ended up being Claris and Elliot's on-foot section."

He continues, "The A-Life system was developed because of the team's desire to show the life of living creatures in a very realistic environment throughout the game. The characters performed much better than I had ever expected or imagined."

The Nightopians were angelic hatchlings that lived in the world of Nightopia. They would all behave individually according to their own experiences in the game. They could breed with the game's sinister Nightmaren enemies and could even die if the player came to close to them. *NiGHTS* also featured a fantastic evolving music engine, which allowed pitch, tempo and melody to alter according to their state of mind.

Despite pushing the technical envelope of the Saturn, the most endearing aspect about *NiGHTS* came from the way it affected players on an emotional level. With not one word uttered throughout the entire game, the game's narrative unfurls visually and is fused with one of the grandest musical scores to have ever graced a videogame.

"Our sound team got involved once we locked the game concept, I remember that they also struggled with the direction of music and sound, much like we did with the game design," recalls Naka. "They produced and cancelled and tried again and again. After the trial and error period, we came up with the tune, which is the main theme song of *NiGHTS*."

> "AT THE START WE THOUGHT THAT DEVELOPING IN FULL 3D WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT" NAKA ON ONE OF THE DIFFICULT DECISIONS THEY FACED

» Look how beautiful it is, just look at it.

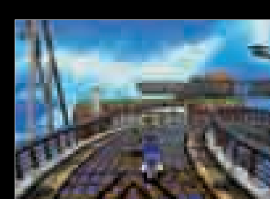


CHRISTMAS NiGHTS

NiGHTS would be the last title that Yuji Naka would contribute on as a main programmer. It was developed during a period when the role of a producer, in a videogame sense, had finally started

NIGHTS ADVENTURE

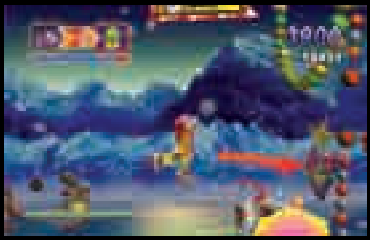
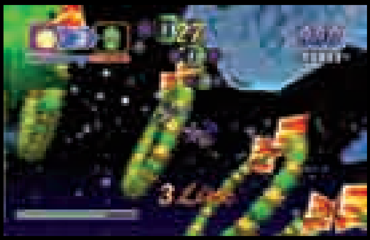
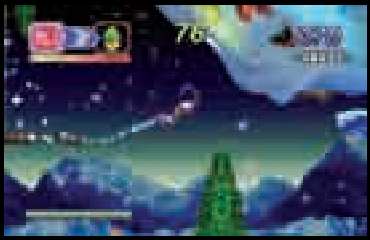
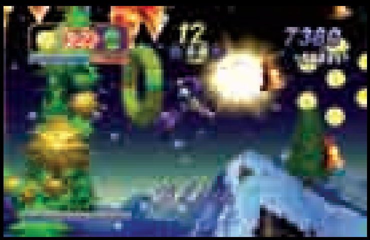
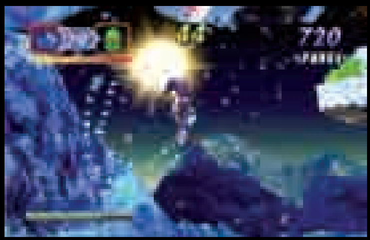
As game development progresses, you'll often find certain titles get cancelled (often quite late in development) when their original host platform is seen as a non-viable product. While the development and eventual cancellation of *Sonic X-treme* is well documented (you can read about its demise in issue 22) there was another *Sonic* title in development for the Saturn that used the *NiGHTS* engine. Namely, *Sonic Adventure*. "Yes, we'd been developing our own full 3D *Sonic* game, *Sonic Adventure*," confirms Izuka. "However, due to technical issues and the timing of the upcoming Dreamcast project, we had to end it and instead incorporated it into the Saturn's *Sonic Jam*. We then moved development for *Sonic Adventure* on to the Dreamcast." This could well reveal why Yuji Naka allegedly decided to quit after he discovered that Sega Technical Institute was using the *NiGHTS* engine for the aforementioned *Sonic X-treme*.



NiGHTS

WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS (AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR)...

Along with the first disc of *Panzer Dragoon Saga*, *Christmas NiGHTS* is arguably the greatest freebie to have ever been given away with a magazine. Using the Saturn's input clock, details about the game will change depending on when you play it. Normally known as *NiGHTS: Limited Edition*, the title screen displays 'Winter NiGHTS' during the months of November and January and everything is coated in a layer of rich snow. Come December, 'Christmas NiGHTS' mode is activated, and a slew of fantastic little features are unlocked. Nightopians dress up as Christmas elves, the huge Ideya captures are replaced by Christmas trees, while an instrumental version of *Jingle Bells* plays in the background. Then there's notification of New Year's Day and the fact that you can play as a Reala on April Fool's Day. Perhaps the best extra of all though is 'Sonic The Hedgehog: Into Dreams', where you get to play as the loveable mascot and race around Spring Valley on foot. Thank God Shadow wasn't around then.

to become clear. His work promoting the game would prove as significant as his creative input.

"In order to introduce the title to as many people as possible, I created promotion assets such as videos and pamphlets," says Naka. "However, most of all by creating *Christmas NiGHTS*, I was able to plan services for fans and it was a very good challenge for me."

The idea behind *Christmas NiGHTS* came to Yuji Naka while on a trip to America. He explained that he was a big fan of *Lemmings*, a game he first discovered while working on *Sonic 2*. After spotting the festive *Christmas Lemmings* in a store, he felt inspired to use the idea to incorporate something similar into his own work. For Yuji, *NiGHTS* lent itself perfectly.

"The plan was to create a demo to bundle with the Saturn. There was a Christmas campaign by Sega to come up with something special and we came up with the idea of *Christmas NiGHTS*. We really enjoyed developing the additional content and adding the new stories. It was fantastic to see the finished product end up more than just a demo. We launched the original *NiGHTS* in July and released *Christmas NiGHTS* that Christmas. It took us three to four months to make," recalls Izuka.

Using the internal clock mechanisms, that Sega had supplanted inside the Saturn, allowed Sonic Team to eke out even more life from the disc. If you played around with the machine's clock it was possible to unlock 'Happy New Year' and 'Summer NiGHTS' festivals within the game.

JOURNEY OF DREAMS

It's taken almost 11 years, but a true *NiGHTS* sequel is nearly upon us, and there's a sweet irony to be found in that the game will make a re-emergence on the Wii. With Nintendo's console boasting such an impressive installation base, hopefully the game will finally get in front of the audience it wholly deserves. But why has it taken so long for Sega to finally release a follow up?

"We had been wishing to produce a sequel for over 11 years," says Izuka. "In fact, in an interview a long time ago, I promised to make a sequel someday. However, I had a mission to bring the *Sonic* series out, plus NiGHTS was not that well known a character so it took a long time to make this happen. I'm based in the US Sonic Team studio and nowadays Sonic Team Japan produces all the *Sonic* titles, so finally I got my chance to work on *NiGHTS*."

While the early hands-on play we had with the game revealed that *Journey Of Dreams* has retained the look and feel of the original game, there are some aspects to this new appendage that have been tweaked.

"From the experience of the original game and gauging the public's reaction, I realised that we had one or two features that were not user-friendly and perhaps ended up confusing some people," admits Izuka. "As you may know, the boy and girl characters are essential in *NiGHTS*, but in the original

» Don't worry we didn't actually get an "A" rating. Everything was still spinning when we took the screenshot.



» NiGHTS takes a quick rest, before heading off to collect more blue orbs.





» Brrrr… Looks cold doesn't it? Best pack a scarf and some mittens.


» Don't be fooled by the new look, the original *NiGHTS* magic is still in abundance.

game these characters simply played a recovery role when you and your NiGHTS timed out. To make the game simple while still offering depth, in the upcoming *Journey Of Dreams* game, we set them up as having their own missions, so they become more than just sub-characters."

He continues, "We've kept the original gameplay, while also making it simple and friendly for the new users. The appeal of the characters and the world the NiGHTS live in; these are the points I wanted to improve for the sequel. We had a long discussion within the team about the depth of the game. We came up with new ideas such as My Dream, which is a new feature that allows you to customise your personal world through Nintendo Wi-Fi connection."

Asking Izuka and Yuji what it is they're most proud of about the game seems a somewhat silly question, but they both polarise their answers towards the reactions of the player and not the actual game itself.

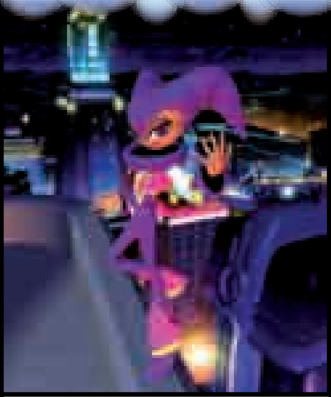
"There are a lot features that I am particularly proud of. Tackling the subject of the challenges of growing up [is one] and the game's unique controls is another. But if I needed to choose one, then I would say the excitement of the last stage. People are touched by RPGs and adventure games in the same way that they are by *NiGHTS*. We are very proud that we could provide and express all that excitement from an action game," reveals Izuka.

Naka says, "I think the part I feel most proud of is how we succeeded in impressing people without using speech. In recent games, characters will speak and I feel that people are less likely to play by sharing the same emotions and feelings. Many people wrote to us saying that *NiGHTS* had impressed them, and we're very overwhelmed by that."

We couldn't end the interview without pressing both men on the possibilities of seeing the original game being released on the Xbox Live or Virtual Console. Sadly, it appears unlikely our wish will be granted any time soon, but Izuka doesn't discard the notion entirely.

"Because the original *NiGHTS* was developed specifically for the Sega Saturn, I'm afraid there is no easy way to port the game to the latest hardware," he says. "However, we would like to make user's (who want to play the original *NiGHTS)* dreams come true someday using the latest hardware. Compared with *Sonic* and *Mario*, *NiGHTS* is not that popular. We are so glad to hear that people are eager to see a sequel, even after a decade, and that they're excited with the news of *Journey Of Dreams*. 'One and only, unique' – this was the concept and our goal that we set from the very beginning of the original game. We are very happy that we can bring a sequel out and hope *NiGHTS* will make people happy again."

> "WE'VE KEPT THE ORIGINAL GAMEPLAY, WHILE MAKING IT SIMPLE AND FRIENDLY FOR NEW USERS" IZUKA ON JOURNEY OF DREAMS


» Some of the original Saturn art that was used to promote *NiGHTS Into Dreams*.

» It's taken 11 long years, but *NiGHTS* finally has the correct cuffs.


» *Journey Of Dreams* shows that it's good to touch.


遠くの稀で、エキゾチックなゲームを愛する人々のため

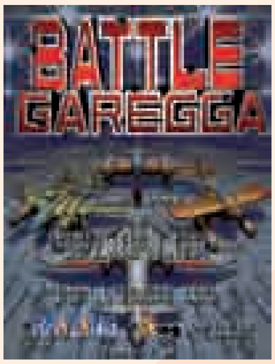
FULL OF EASTERN

DO YOUR SATURN A FAVOUR, SEEK OUT THIS GRITTY, HARDER-THAN-RUSTY-NAILS SHOOT-'EM-UP

BATTLE GAREGGA

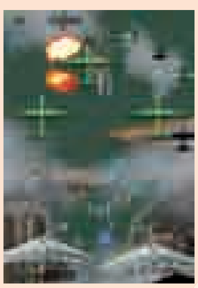
Raizing's amazing aeronautical shoot-'em-up Battle Garegga represents perhaps the pinnacle of 2D shmuppery on the Sega Saturn. Mike Bevan re-examines this classic steam-punk blaster, and stable mate to the wonderful Soukyugurentai

IN THE KNOW

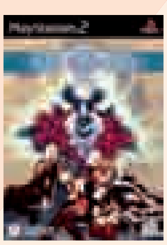


- **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- **DEVELOPER:** RAIZING/EIGHTING
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** SEGA SATURN
- **ALSO AVAILABLE FOR:** ARCADE
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £45+
- **CAN'T IMPORT? THEN WHY NOT TRY:** STRIKERS 1945

Though not quite as beautifully honed as *Battle Garegga*, Midas Interactive's *1945* compilation on the PS2 (released on its Play-It! label) offers shooter fans the chance to play two sterling titles in one pack, namely the highly enjoyable *Strikers 1945 I* and *II*. Drawing heavily on Capcom's *194X* series, and with a surreal sci-fi World War II setting where Spitfires and Mustangs coexist with giant transforming mecha, Psikyo's games remain classics of the vertical-shooter genre. The PAL release lacks a 60Hz mode, but for around £5 or less you can't really go wrong.







Interesting Fact Of The Month
Although Raizing is effectively no more, Shinobu Yagawa, the genius behind both *Battle Garegga* and *Battle Bakraid*, joined rival shooter developers Cave in 2001, where he oversaw the production of *Ibara*. To all intents and purposes this is a super-charged *Battle Garegga*, featuring very similar play mechanics and visual design, but an even more impressive array of collectable weaponry than in any of Yagawa's previous games. *Ibara* received an excellent PS2 port in 2006 in Japan, and is well worth hunting down for *Garegga* fans.





» I spy with my little eye something beginning with b. Bullets. Lots and lots of bullets.

メガ駆動機構

Those in the know realise what a fantastic platform the Saturn was for 2D shooters, and curse the powers that be (well, Sega Europe) for bringing only a fraction of top-tier products over that gamers in Asia and Japan had access to. With its dedicated 2D architecture Sega's 32-bit console was easily able to handle the majority of then-current sprite-based arcade games running on such hardware as Capcom's CPS-2 or Taito's F3 (Cybercore) systems.



» The Sega Saturn version's cover features some rather gorgeous steam-punk artwork.

Battle Garegga was an arcade shooter created by Raizing, a company formed from the remnants of legendary developer Toaplan. Following in the footsteps of Hot-B's *Steel Empire*, it was a beautiful summation of the videogame 'steam-punk' ethic in vertical-shooter form. Painting a sumptuously detailed, retro-styled world of huge prop-driven flying battleships, steam-powered bosses and moody militaristic backdrops, and lauded by the Japanese gaming press and arcade-goers alike, *Garegga* was a perfect choice for conversion to Sega's new console.

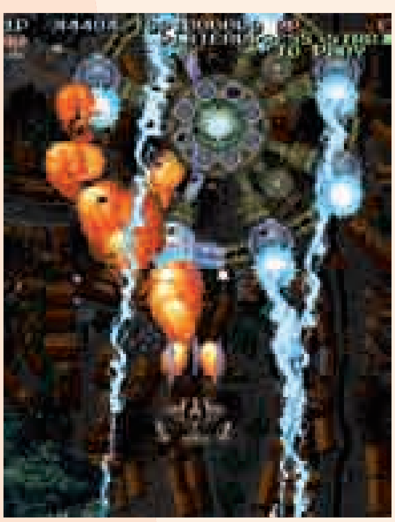
With *Battle Garegga*, the programming team behind Raizing's *Soukyugurentai* took the traditional war-plane arcade shooter lineage which had evolved through titles such as the *194X* series and *Strikers 1945*, and brought it kicking and screaming into the Nineties with a technically and aesthetically stunning piece of videogame craftsmanship. The game is heavily indebted to Taito's F2 arcade shoot-'em-up *Gun Frontier* (like *Soukyugurentai*, also available as a Saturn conversion) in many of its mechanics and the styling of the explosions and smart



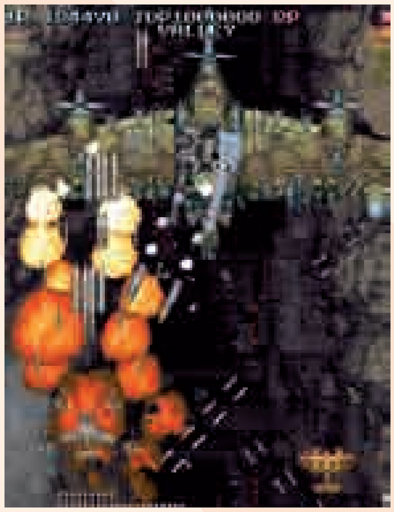
» "Select your crate Player One."

bombs; apparently the Raizing designers were fans. The Saturn conversion of the game is astoundingly good, bettering its arcade counterpart by ridding the game of some of its slowdown, and adding extra game modes and options such as the ability to change the enemy bullets from the thin, less-visible default type to easier-to-see circular projectiles. The all-important 'Tate' mode is present, allowing you to tilt your TV on its side and play in the original vertical format, while there's also a new remixed soundtrack by Manabu Namiki, whose work would be later heard in Cave shooters such as *DoDonPachi Dai-Oujou*.

After its colourful fantasy shooters *Sorcerer Striker* and *Kingdom Grand Prix*, Raizing went for a grittier, industrial look with *Battle Garegga*. Everything has a dark, 'used' appearance here,



» Burn baby burn. Wild Snail's flamer weapon in action.



» All hell breaks loose at the climax of the 'Valley' stage.

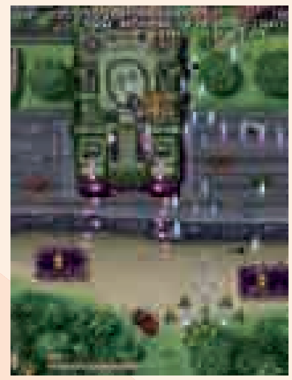
Star Wars-style. At the start you can choose between four planes, each with individual weaponry and evocative names such as 'Wild Snail'. Each plane has a standard-shot main gun plus a unique secondary weapon, which include homing-missile storms, wing-mounted flame-throwers and the impressive 'napalm rain'. A myriad of power-up items can be used to increase your fire power and smart-bomb stock. Floating bonus medals drift down the screen and can be collected for extra points, which increase in value as you chain collect them, resetting to the default points bonus if you leave one behind. Up to four outriggers can be collected to add additional fire power to your craft, *Gradius*-style. You can control the formation of these 'option'-like helpers, which can be positioned so as to shoot forwards, towards the rear, or to spin around your craft shooting outwards through a full 360 degrees. And, as in *Gradius*, pursuing a full quota of these 'multiples' gives you that nice warm power-hungry feeling that only the best shoot-'em-ups can produce, as you cut a path through the explosive on-screen mayhem.

Battle Garegga is graphically very busy, and the screen can frequently become covered with an almost impenetrable wall of enemy bullets and explosions. This can be a bit daunting, but stick with it, because like Minter's *Space Giraffe* once you get used to the visuals you'll soon be able to 'read' them far more easily and progress in the game. As in *Raiden* it's not a good idea to hang about in one place too long as enemies tend to snipe right at you, producing that exciting, kinetic feel of classic old-school shooters. A notable aspect of *Garegga* is its 'rank' system, which will increase the difficulty of the game in real-time as you play, depending on a number of factors such as how many lives or bombs you have stocked, and how successful your progression through the game has been. In short, the better at the game you are the harder it becomes and the more enemy attacks will be thrown at you. It's a feature that still divides opinion and elevates the game into 'hardcore' shooter territory (*Garegga*'s semi-sequel *Ibara* has an even harsher 'rank' system and is even more difficult for the shooter novice), again it may take some getting used to, but it's an interesting concept, which adds a lot of depth to the game. Whichever side of the fence you fall, one thing is certain, *Battle Garegga* is a spectacular and timeless shoot-'em-up and a sure-fire reason to hang onto that ageing Saturn.

BATTLE BAKRAID

Released in 1999, *Battle Bakraid*, the arcade-only sequel to *Battle Garegga* is yet another top-calibre shooter from Raizing and builds spectacularly on many elements seen in its prequel. The graphical style is much more colourful this time around, there are more planes to choose from, and an extra two 'option' outriggers are available to complement your weaponry and create mega on-screen destruction.







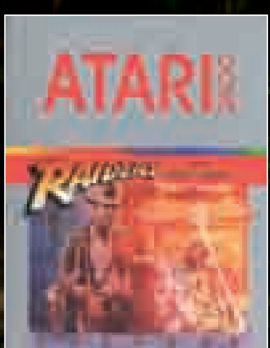
» Air Traffic Control is not going to like this one bit.

私を読み、私に書くことができ、私に知らせれば好みのゲームはある

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK

He's best remembered for the mighty Yars' Revenge and the infamous ET, but sandwiched between those highs and lows, legendary VCS coder Howard Scott Warshaw gave us the first major videogame film licence. He entertains Paul Drury with tales of Lost Arks, hanging with Spielberg and fearsome bullwhips

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** ATARI

» **DEVELOPER:** HOWARD SCOTT WARSHAW

» **RELEASED:** 1982

» **GENRE:** ACTION ADVENTURE

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £2 (UNBOXED), £12 (BOXED)



"When I was coding *Raiders*, I really tried to get into character," begins Howard Scott Warshaw. "I wore the hat and had a real ten-foot-long leather bullwhip. Man, it was loud. Like a gunshot! I said it was for R&D – Research and Discipline. If people were snooping round the building, I'd sneak up behind them and crack that whip. They'd jump out of their suits and I'd be like, 'Hey, how ya doin'?"

Howard liked to make a lasting first impression and that's exactly what he'd done with his first title for the VCS. *Yars' Revenge* was a snazzy little shooter – fast, fun and with a fancy full-screen explosion, it remains the biggest-selling original title for the console. So when Atari bosses were looking for someone to adapt the box office hit of 1981, Howard enthusiastically volunteered.

"I was very interested in a movie licence, because for me that was the perfect middle ground. You get to do an original game and it has the boost of an actual movie property. Doing coin-op conversions always seemed an exercise in futility to me. And I loved *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*. Once I'd got the project, I didn't really need to see it again – it was burned into my mind," he says.

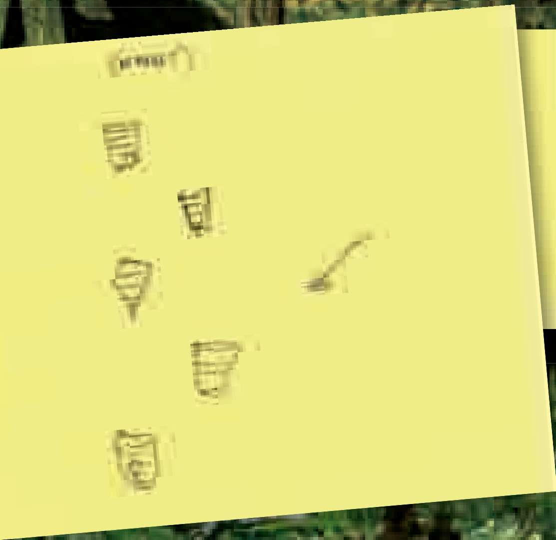
Remember, this was one of the earliest film-to-game conversions, long before 'movie licence' became a dirty phrase among gamers. It also had the added benefit of requiring Howard to visit Universal Studios to meet with Steven Spielberg. Over a game of *Yars'*, the pair talked about ideas for the *Raiders* videogame, though Howard couldn't resist airing an idea of his own.

"I told him I had a theory that he was an alien," he says. "I figured that contact with aliens was imminent and they needed to 'prepare' the earth, so they sent an advance team. You see, with *Close Encounters* and *ET*, it was really the first time aliens had been presented positively – friendly figures, not monsters. Spielberg was part of the alien marketing team…"

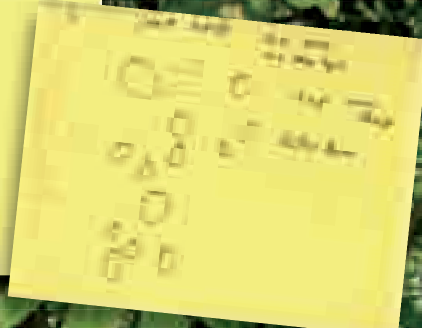
Despite, or perhaps because of, this insight, Howard returned with the director's blessing and began work on the game in the summer of 1981. Specific design ideas were still vague at this point, but he quickly dismissed the notion of simply producing a one-screen arcade game, where whips and Nazis replaced the usual lasers and aliens.

"Man, that would be like the way pinball machines are themed, which always cracks me up," he chuckles. "No, I knew it would be my first adventure game. To me, the idea of the movie was not action, action, action. It was about running around the globe to solve this huge puzzle. And when anyone thought about adventure games, they thought about *Adventure*. That was a genre-establishing work, a breakthrough title, and I thought there was no point doing something unless it made a contribution. *Adventure* showed, in a very simplistic way, how to present a larger world and I felt a lot of pressure to make the biggest game that existed on the machine at that time. I wanted a world that had more unique playable scenarios than any other and they all had to interact. A game bigger than people could imagine."

With the genre decided upon and armed with a whole heap of ambition, Howard began coding his epic treasure hunt. He worked backwards, sticking closely to the plot of the film but not slavishly so. "Like when they make a movie of a book, I picked the things that I thought needed to be there," he explains. "The ultimate goal is finding the Ark, so I needed a Treasure Room. I have to hide that somewhere, which led to the Mesa Fields. There had to be a lot of options that I could randomise, so it's difficult to find if you don't know which one to go for. Then I needed a place where you learn about the Treasure Room – the Map Room! That room was a key element of the movie to me, where he gets it all together. That was huge! And of course, you're going to need a key…"







Here we have the early sketches done by Howard of the Marketplace, Map Room and Mesa Field…



…each re-imagined for the game's concept art by Jerome Domurat.

And so, the pieces of the puzzle began to take shape. The intrepid archaeologist Mr Jones begins his quest unarmed, but soon picks up his trademark whip and is battling snakes, detonating grenades and diligently scouring the Marketplace for handy items. Each new object or artefact discovered suggests fresh possibilities. Will the parachute stop me plummeting to the Valley of Poison? Will this flute let me charm the snake? And what the hell is the Chai for?

The array of items scattered across the game world allowed a level of problem solving deeper than the basic 'red key opens red door'. Having to manipulate and combine objects made the challenge more complex for the player and similarly posed the first serious test for the programmer.

"I couldn't make the game I wanted if you could only carry one object at a time, like in *Adventure*," he says. "You'd constantly be traversing the map and you don't want the situation where the player knows what they have to do, but faces a long, monotonous challenge to do it. I needed a way to give the player free movement and handle an inventory at the same time.'

Howard came up with an ingenious solution to the problem. As *Raiders* was a single-player game, he decided to use the second joystick to let the player manage the items Indy has picked up on his quest. Now our hero could out manoeuvre giant spiders, avaricious thieves and even the demented 'Raving Lunatic', while smoothly switching between weapons and collecting treasures without the interruption of an inventory screen.

"I liked to innovate and the two joystick control mechanic hadn't been done before on the VCS," he says proudly. "It also created a new kind of dexterity challenge. There were times when you had to operate them together, like opening the parachute and catching the branch. That's not easy!"

Indeed, trying to gauge the level of difficulty that the game's many challenges would pose to a first-time player was an issue that dogged Howard throughout the development of the game. Make the puzzles too easy and the quest is over too soon, but make the puzzles too hard and you risk the angry gamer giving up in frustration.

"There's a fundamental difference between making an adventure game and a regular action game," says Howard. "If you do a good action game, the maker of the game should have the same experience as the players. With an adventure, where there are puzzles to solve, he cannot possibly have the same experience. Trying to tune a puzzle so it's tough, but not too tough. How do you do that? How can you get the perspective of not knowing what the answer is when you know the answer? It's all about

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

YARS' REVENGE
SYSTEM: VCS
YEAR: 1981

ET (PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: VCS
YEAR: 1981

SABOTEUR
SYSTEM: VCS
YEAR: 2004



Not all of Howard's ideas made the final game. This dragon was originally intended to guard the Map Room. Like the game isn't hard enough already.





RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK

BALLING STELLA

Creating an epic adventure title in just 8K and with the mere five 'sprites' available on the VCS required some clever coding, especially when one of those programmable characters, the 'ball', was just a single pixel. Undaunted, Howard came up with an ingenious method of turning that lonely dot into an animated creature. Knowing the VCS hardware produces the screen display one horizontal line at a time, he worked out how to change the position of that dot on each scan line as it moves downwards. "That's how I created the snake. The head moves to a new place, the tail disappears and it really runs down the screen. All that animation is done with one pixel. I used the same technique for the Tsetse flies, using two little dashes next to each other and flipping them back and forth. As long as they're not on the same horizontal line, it works." Howard shared the discovery with his fellow coders via the cheekily titled 'Balling Stella' memo, a sweet reminder of the camaraderie enjoyed by those digital pioneers. For more on those happy days, go to www.onceuponatari.com and order Howard's wonderful documentary chronicling life at Atari in the golden age.

guessing and projecting and field testing those concepts."

Trying to find that satisfying balance in gameplay that lies in the narrow strip between difficult and impossible is something game developers still wrestle with today. It was a uniquely demanding task for Howard as he was introducing so many new ideas to the medium. In *Raiders*, he pioneered the concept of time passing in the game world. Wait patiently and check those baskets in the market again for fresh bounty. Revisit the Room of Shining Light to see what secrets it might offer up this time. And most poignantly, watch the sun rise in the Map Room to be truly enlightened.

"There's a time of day in *Raiders* and it means something," says Howard. "To have a cyclical aspect in the game adds another layer of texture. It's like how many variables does your puzzle have? Here's a lock, here's a key and here's a timepiece. You need to come back at the right time. A lot of games have used that idea since, but I think it was one of the first. It had a sense of time, of real life."

The thrill of witnessing dawn break and seeing your medallion illuminate the location of the Lost Ark is a defining moment in a game of surprises. Hidden exits and shortcuts abound as new areas are stumbled upon through exploration. "I don't want to restrict people in a game," he states. "I want to give them freedom. Anything you can do to give the player the sense of more space and opportunities to explore, you do it."



Indy ponders whether to buy a Flymo, I mean flute, from a sheikh in the busy Marketplace.

And explore you must as *Raiders* seldom signposted the way ahead. Progress required experimenting with each new object, trading stolen gold with sheikhs on the black market in the hope of some fresh revelation and a steely determination to battle on, even when you felt utterly lost. In the days before players had recourse to the cheating internet, many were left baffled. Thankfully, the marketing men insisted on including numerous helpful pointers in the manual, against Howard's wishes.

"I didn't see the point of having this elaborate game if people could just open the manual and run through it. In retrospect, I realise we should've given people more, not less. I've learned that people want a road map and then they can choose whether to use it or not. They put in more tips than I wanted and I just asked that they had lots of warnings. Spoiler warnings! We have a vernacular for talking about this now, but when it was happening, nobody had done this kind of thing before."

> "I TOLD SPIELBERG I HAD A THEORY THAT HE WAS AN ALIEN. HE WAS PREPARING EARTH FOR THE IMMINENT INVASION…" HOWARD ON HIS MEETING WITH STEVEN SPIELBERG

Even with the handy hints, it seems inconceivable that players could have worked out how to complete the game with the special ending that sees 'HSW2' appear on screen (Howard's initials, with the '2' signifying it was his second game) unaided. A spoiler warning of our own here – it involves dropping the





Jerome took Howard's very basic scrawl of a snake-filled temple and really let his creative juices flow…



The largest area of the game: the Mesa Field. Navigating it required some masterful swinging of your Ankh.

Chai while in free fall in the split second before you need to open your parachute, snag the innocuous looking branch and enter the Well of Souls.

"Yes that's ridiculously obscure, absurdly so," laughs Howard. "But these were things I intended to get out through word of mouth. That's the second life of the game – the lore about the game, the conversations about it. The meta game. I had a real strong sense that was important. A game that doesn't generate that secondary aspect… where's that?"

Another example of Howard's prescient thinking. He even had the foresight to produce the first recorded example of another modern gaming commonplace – the video walk-through. In June 1982, just prior to its official release, he previewed *Raiders* at the Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago by screening a specially filmed demo of himself completing the game and providing a running commentary as he went. It particularly impressed one member of the audience.

"I played the tape to Spielberg and at the end he turned to me and said, 'Wow, that was really great. It's just like a movie!' It was one of the most gratifying moments of my entire life."

Spielberg was not alone in his admiration. The game went on to be another million-seller for Howard, but its success was a double-edged sword. Spielberg asked for Howard to handle the *ET* film licence, but this time, instead of ten months to work on the game, he was given a minuscule five weeks.

"I was still trying to innovate with *ET*, doing this 3D world, but that was silly and unrealistic in the time I had. I'd learned so much doing *Raiders* and I didn't get the chance to pour it into *ET*."



Howard (right) and Steven Spielberg. Which one do you think is the alien?

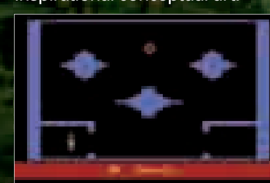
And sadly, the collapse of Atari in the mid Eighties (which many blamed on the commercial failure of *ET*, but that's another story…) denied Howard the opportunity to build on the creative ambition and technical wizardry (see the Balling Stella boxout) that shines through *Raiders*.

But this tale may yet have a happy ending. After years outside the industry, Howard has rejoined the fold and is now employed as a software manager at Blueshift, Inc. "We're a games software contractor who put the guts in games you are used to playing. I'm back – behind the scenes, but in the action!"

So with the fourth *Indiana Jones* film finally in production, we wonder whether he'd fancy a crack at the inevitable game spin-off. "Oh, I woody, woody would!" he cackles. "Am I just dreaming? Put it this way – sometimes dreams do come true."

INDY ART

While Howard handled most of the graphics himself, he did employ the talents of graphic artist Jerome Domurat to produce the animated character of Indiana himself. "Indy looks wonderful but Jerome's biggest contribution was perhaps his conceptual art," enthuses Howard. "We talked about ideas for each scenario and I'd sketch out ridiculous little mock-ups of the concepts. Jerome would come up with these wonderful renderings of the action in the scene. It never would have occurred to me to come up with something like that because I knew it was impossible to do on the hardware, but Jerome was thinking in terms of graphical representation not technical limitations. When I was doing a presentation, of course I wanted to use them, not my little scrawls! It really made me feel the thing I was working on was even bigger than I was thinking. His art, plus having him as a cohort on the project, working ideas off each other, that was a huge contribution." **Retro Gamer** can exclusively publish some of Howard's early sketches for *Raiders*, alongside examples of Jerome's inspirational conceptual art.



"WITH RAIDERS, I WANTED TO MAKE THE BIGGEST GAME THAT EXISTED ON THE MACHINE AT THAT TIME, BIGGER THAN PEOPLE COULD IMAGINE…"

HOWARD MAKES 8K GO A LONG WAY



The sun rises and illuminates the Map Room. A revelatory moment.



Thanks to Matt Allen for providing all these screenshots. And look, didn't the boy do well at the end?

SKATE OR DIE!

WAKEY WAKEY, HANDS ON SKATEY



- » **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- » **RELEASED:** 1987
- » **GENRE:** SPORTS
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** NES
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID



HISTORY

One thing I truly love about videogames is that they allow you to, a) experience things that you may never in your lifetime grow the cojones to try, and b) become great at things, which, in reality, you otherwise wouldn't be.

A perfect game to exemplify such a case, for me at least, is *Skate Or Die!*. An in-yer-face summary of that Americana skateboarding culture that tried its best to infect us back when 'Global Hypercolor' was a fashion term, exclamation marks were more popular than full stops, shorts were manufactured inside a mysterious triangle somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean, and it was cool to wear stone-washed denim adorned with an image of Bart Simpson across the upper-thigh area.

Yep, *Skate Or Die!*, I love that title. It's a fib, of course. No deaths in the entire game, certainly none brought on by a lack of skating. Granted, it sounds punchy and attention grabbing and was probably a play on the idiom 'do or die', or 'breathe or die' or 'look both ways or die', but that's still no excuse in my eyes.

Events ranged from *Gladiators*-style giant cotton-bud duelling, to half-tube high jumping and *Road Rash*-style race fights. Each of the six on offer gave great variation and utilised an annoyingly different method of D-pad and button presses to make use of its instruction manual.

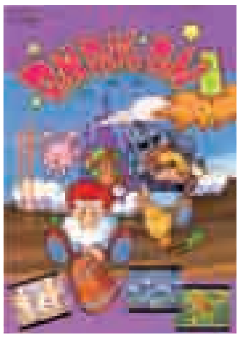
What really made *Skate Or Die!* so great, of course, was its sense of freedom. Okay, compared to current-gen games, the chance to enter a skate shop and rub a cursor over a greasy punk rocker, spurring him to say "Whatcha starring at?" or "Semper Fi or die", would have most of us spinning 360 discs into concrete walls, but for its day it was almost like being dropped inside your very own virtual world. A world where skating was God, tricks were like currency and if you couldn't do either you'd probably be deported to a country where swimming pools were used for swimming (gasp!) and people travelled to work using mysterious contraptions known as legs.




KATE SHOP
FREESTY
HIGHJU
TO
DOWNHILL
JAM

ARCADE Inspection

TAITO'S 'F' SERIES JAMMA HARDWARE



» A flyer for *Don Doko Don*, featuring its hammer-equipped gnomes.

THE F2 AND F3 ARCADE BOARDS WERE THE PLATFORM FOR MANY OF TAITO'S FINEST ARCADE GAMES DURING THE LATE EIGHTIES AND BEYOND. MIKE BEVAN CONTINUES HIS ARCADE ODYSSEY WITH THE TAITO HARDWARE SERIES THAT GAVE US PLATFORMING GNOMES, COMICAL BOVINE SPACE INVADERS MISHAPS, ENDLESSLY CUTE PUZZLE GAMES AND A WHOLE LOTTA BUB AND BOB

By the mid Eighties Taito had been involved in the arcade and amusement industry for an astounding 30 years. The company had started in 1953 producing vending machines, jukeboxes and 'crane' amusement games, before famously revolutionising the arcade industry with 1978's *Space Invaders*. The colossal success of *Space Invaders* had prompted Taito's management to invest heavily in videogame manufacture and expand its business into other global territories, resulting in the foundation of Taito America in 1979. This satellite office handled North American distribution as well as the licensing of US product such as Amstar's *Phoenix* and Williams' *Defender* for the Japanese market. Back in Japan smaller third-party developers such as Data East, a very recently created SNK (*Ozma Wars*) and even Nintendo (*Space Firebird*) were sub-contracted to supplement the worldwide demand for new arcade product. With the 'videogames crash' of 1983, however, Taito found itself with a significantly reduced market-base overseas, as the implosion of several powerful US home console manufacturers began to have a knock-on effect with nervous arcade operators.

Taito countered by concentrating resolutely on production for its domestic marketplace. But compared to its rivals, Taito's in-house development team was soon lagging, producing very basic and generic arcade action titles and unimaginative *Invaders* clones, now unlikely to trouble the average coin-op punter's wallet. Even minor hits like 1983's *Elevator Action* and 1986's *Arkanoid* (obviously hugely derivative of Atari's *Breakout*) hadn't done a great deal to dent the popularity of hits like Capcom's *Ghosts 'N Goblins* or Konami's *Time Pilot*. The manufacturer again sought third-party development support, sub-contracting Toaplan to produce a number of vertically scrolling shoot-'em-ups such as *Flying Shark* and *Truxton*, to compete with popular games like Namco's *Xevious* and Capcom's *1942*. However, eight years would pass before Taito's in-house development team finally found itself with its first worldwide success since *Space Invaders*. *Bubble Bobble*, a well-deserved hit, especially in the form of licensed home conversions, would be instrumental in influencing the development of a whole generation of cute platformers and puzzle games from 1987 onwards.

By 1988, advances in processor technology had resulted in a number of titles, which brought Taito firmly back into the arcade limelight. *Chase HQ*, Taito's first pseudo-3D racing game, took advantage of fast dual-CPU hardware, and a custom graphics chip to power the game's abundant sprite scaling. The popular *Operation Wolf* had similar advanced graphic capabilities. But as most of these games relied on custom hardware specifically tailored to each game, production costs for each new release were high. Attempting to cut manufacturing and

ZUNTATA: TAITO ROCKS

Zuntata are Taito's sound development team and in-house band, and were formed in 1987. They are responsible for the majority of the chip-based soundtracks for Taito's arcade games, including *Bubble Bobble*, *Arkanoid* and many F2/F3 hardware titles. Zuntata have gained a cult following in their native Japan, where over 50 albums of their soundtrack music have been released. Founder member Hisayoshi Ogura, credited in Taito's games as 'OGR', is often cited as the group's leader and main composer, but many of Zuntata's members worked separately on each specific game. This mix of composers produced a huge range of styles in Zuntata's output, from the energetic, upbeat scores of *Bubble Symphony* or *Liquid Kids* to the brooding atmospherics of *Darius Gaiden* or *Gun Frontier*.

HISAYOSHI OGURA (OGR) Having joined Taito as early as 1983, OGR is one of the most prolific composers at Taito, being widely known and appreciated for his works on titles like *Darius* and *Rainbow Islands*. His *Darius Gaiden* soundtrack is one of his most well-known pieces, an incredible score blending together such diverse soundscapes as rock, trip-hop and opera.
Key Works: *Ninja Warriors, Rainbow Islands, The New Zealand Story, Arkanoid, Darius, Darius Gaiden, G Darius*

TAMAYO KAWAMOTO Tamayo Kawamoto started her career at Capcom, producing soundtracks for many games including *Commando* (1985), *Black Tiger* (1987) and *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* (1988). In 1988 she left Capcom and joined the Zuntata sound team at Taito, as the group's keyboardist. Her first solo work was *RayForce* a 'progressive techno' soundtrack with a brooding, menacing feel, which blends perfectly with the dark atmosphere of the game.
Key Works: *RayForce, RayStorm, Night Striker, RayCrisis*

YASUHISA WATANABE (YACK) Yasuhisa was a Zuntata member from 1988-1998 before leaving Taito to join G.rev, where he produced the soundtrack for *Border Down*.





His versatile approach to music composition resulted in some of Taito's most varied arcade soundtracks, such as the Morricone-like *Gun Frontier* and the ambient *Metal Black* scores. He also soundtracked the last ever F3 arcade release, *Landmaker*.
Key Works: *Elevator Action Returns, Growl, Gun Frontier, Super Space Invaders '91, Metal Black, Puchi Carat, PuLiRuLa*

Other Zuntata members include Yasuko Yamada (*Puzzle Bobble, Bubble Symphony, Don Doko Don*), Norihiro Furukawa (*Arabian Magic*), Masahiko Takaki (*Rastan Saga*), Kazuko Umino (*Space Invaders '95, Gekirindan*) and Shuichiro Nakazawa (*Cleopatra Fortune*).



» The F2 hardware 'Indy-lite' beat-'em-up *Growl*.

development costs and compete more successfully with rival Capcom, in 1989 Taito made the decision to consolidate its title-specific 2D arcade hardware into a single generic board, resulting in the creation of the F1/F2 'meta-system'. Some of Taito's recent arcade games were still relying on 8-bit technology. *The New Zealand Story* utilised two 6MHz Z80 CPUs running in tandem to accommodate the game's relatively complex colour palette, multiple sprites and multi-directional scrolling. The 'F' series hardware represented quite a jump from previous Taito arcade boards based on the ageing 8-bit Zilog Z80 CPU. The new boards were 16-bit systems designed around a single Motorola MC68000 processor (core CPU of the first generation of Amigas, the Atari ST, and Capcom's CPS-1 arcade hardware). The MC68000 ran at 12MHz, as opposed to the Z80's variable 2-6MHz clock speeds.

F1/F2 hardware was initially designed as a flexible system, which could be tailored to the needs of each particular game by adding custom graphics chips to the generic base PCB. The main board hardware supported three scrolling background tile-planes (allowing for multi-layered parallax backgrounds) and had a powerful sprite engine capable of managing all video chores independently from the main CPU. The first releases utilised its capabilities for hardware expansion, adding custom graphics chips to allow for effects such as background rotation and sprite zooming, features pioneered by Namco's remarkable tank shoot-'em-up *Assault* in 1988.



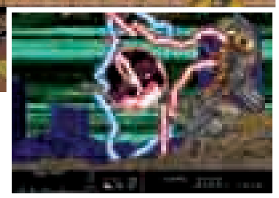
» *Dino Rex* featured beautifully rendered, fully digitised dinosaur creations locked in mortal combat.



» *Thunder Fox*, one of the first F1 arcade games.

Cameltry featured a fully controllable rotating background, which the player could spin via a paddle through 360 degrees to guide a ball through a maze *Marble Madness*-style. *Don Doko Don*, a cute platform game featuring two mallet-equipped gnomes also featured sprite-rotation and scaling, particularly in its 'boss' sections. *Thunder Fox*, a militaristic shooter similar to Konami's *Green Beret*, used an additional tile-map generator chip, which doubled the number of graphic layers in-game, evident in the complexity of its parallax scrolling backgrounds. From 1990 onwards all game releases were designated by Taito as F2 hardware titles, and referenced as such on all marketing and promotional literature.

The early-Nineties saw increasingly sophisticated F2 arcade releases. *Football Champ* was one of the first arcade soccer games to boast background and sprite scaling, allowing players to view the scrolling pitch from both a bird's-eye perspective, and more closely when their players were in possession of the ball. The ease of implementing fast multiple sprites on the F2 hardware was a huge advantage in shoot-'em-ups such as *Gun Frontier*, a 'Western'-themed and visually complex sci-fi shooter based on the work of manga artist Leiji Matsumoto. The well-received *Super Space Invaders '91* followed Namco's *Galaxian*/*Galaga* route by introducing more complex enemy formations, and also boss sections and humorous 'Cattle Mutilation' bonus interludes. *Gun Frontier*'s semi-sequel, *Metal Black* (1991) was originally pitched as a new entry in the *Darius* shooter series, and is notable for a number of development staff that would later leave Taito to form G.rev. Its 2003 shoot-'em-up *Border Down* pays homage to *Metal Black* in its 'counter-beam' attack weapon. F2 arcade



» The 'counter-beam' weapon from *Metal Black* would later be used in *Border Down*.

F3 SYSTEM PUZZLE-'EM-UPS

The F3 system is notable for the amount of arcade puzzle games produced for it during its lifetime. The most famous are the *Puzzle Bobble* titles (sequels 2-4 would appear on F3 along with some 'extra' versions), although the original would appear only on the Taito B-system (a similar arcade board to F2). Venture away from the Bub and Bob vehicles though, and you'll find some excellent titles such as the Egyptian-themed, *Columns*-like *Cleopatra Fortune*, the balloon-busting puzzler *Pop 'N Pop* (featuring those gnomes from *Don Doko Don* and the kiwi from *The New Zealand Story*) and the highly original *Landmaker*, an odd but fascinating hybrid of *Populous*-style 'god-game' and *Tetris*.



» From top-left: *Pop 'N Pop*, *Puzzle Bobble 2*, *Cleopatra Fortune* and *Landmaker*.

F1/F2 SYSTEM HARDWARE SPECIFICATIONS

BOARD TYPE: JAMMA
MAIN CPU: MC68000 @ 12MHZ
SOUND CPU: Z80 (@ 4MHZ
SOUND CHIPS: YM2610 @ 8MHZ
VIDEO RESOLUTION: 320X224
COLOUR PALETTE: 4096
DEBUT GAME: DON DOKO DON (1989)
FINAL RELEASE: QUIZ CRAYON SHINCHAN 2 (1994)



F3 SYSTEM HARDWARE SPECIFICATIONS

BOARD TYPE: JAMMA
MAIN CPU: MC68EC020 @ 16MHZ
SOUND CPU: MC68000 @ 16MHZ
SOUND CHIPS: ES5505 @ 15.2MHZ
VIDEO RESOLUTION: 320 X 232
COLOUR PALETTE: 8192
DEBUT GAME: ARABIAN MAGIC (1992)
FINAL RELEASE: LANDMAKER (1998)

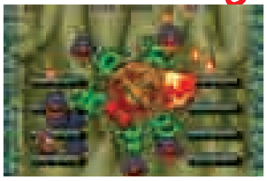


"THE COLOSSAL SUCCESS OF INVADERS HAD PROMPTED TAITO'S MANAGEMENT TO INVEST HEAVILY IN VIDEOGAME MANUFACTURE"

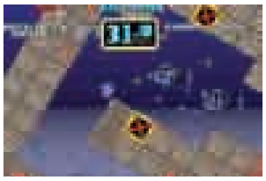
ARCADE Inspection

TEN of the best

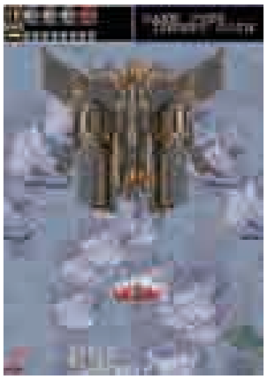
A SELECTION OF THE F2 AND F3 ARCADE HARDWARE'S BEST MOMENTS, WITH A CURRENT MARKET VALUE FOR THE GAME BOARD IN USED CONDITION. F3-SYSTEM PRICES ARE FOR THE FULL KIT INCLUDING THE MOTHERBOARD



DON DOKO DON (1989 – F2 SYSTEM) It's hammer time! Two mallet-equipped gnomes wreak havoc in the kingdom of 'Marry Land' on a quest to rescue a kidnapped fairy princess. *Don Doko Don* plays like a cross between *Bubble Bobble* and Jaleco's *Rod-Land*, and features some excellent play features such as the ability to smash down surrounding masonry to crush the bad guys (a great way of levelling the playing field when things get too tough). Like *Bubble Bobble* it initially comes across as extremely basic, but you soon discover it has plenty of secrets. The bosses were the first in a Taito platformer to feature advanced rotation and sprite-zooming techniques. An underrated gem.
Expect to pay: £40-£50
Home conversions: NES, PC Engine, PS2 and Xbox *Taito Legends Volume 2*



CAMELTRY (1989 – F2 SYSTEM) Setting an eerie precedent for the bonus levels in *Sonic The Hedgehog*, *Cameltry* is a fascinating action-puzzler, which fully utilises the F2 hardware's 2D background rotation capabilities to great effect. All you have to do is guide your ball through a series of increasingly complex and hazard-filled courses by rotating the screen, and try and make it before the time limit expires, shattering your ball(s). Nasty. There are plenty of bonuses to pick up along the way, but the tight time limit ensures that it's far from easy. On the other hand it's worringly addictive and (despite its toughness) will constantly have you returning to it. *Cameltry* is an absolutely brilliant concept and still a remarkably playable title.
Expect to pay: £40-£50
Home conversions: SNES, PS2 and Xbox *Taito Legends Volume 2*, PSP *Taito Legends Power-Up*



GUN FRONTIER (1990 – F2 SYSTEM) *Gun Frontier* has a unique atmosphere and some very inventive features that make it well worth visiting. This game was a major source of inspiration for shooter-developer Raizing. Your ship and those of the enemies are modelled on old Western-style six-shooters, and there's a remarkable soundtrack courtesy of Zuntata.
Expect to pay: £50-£75
Home conversions: Saturn, PS2 and Xbox *Taito Legends Volume 2*



LIQUID KIDS AKA MIZUBAKU ADVENTURE (1990 – F2 SYSTEM) Join us for the jolly tale of a heroic hippopotamus and his aquatic antics (no, we're not kidding). Here's Taito in truly fine form with an exceptionally playable 'cute' scrolling platformer that's somewhat reminiscent of its previous hit *The New Zealand Story*, but features some great new play mechanics that help elevate it to a whole new level. Chuck water-filled spheres *Bubble Bobble*-style to deluge your enemies while trying to reach each stage's end to rescue your hippopota-mate. Enormous fun and definitely one for the 'thinking' platform fan. Like many of the games covered here it's certainly not cheap so you may want to buy one of the available compilations instead.
Expect to pay: £50-£75
Home conversions: Sega Saturn, PC Engine, PS2 and Xbox *Taito Legends 2*



PULIRULA (1991 – F2 SYSTEM) One of the strangest and most surreal arcade games ever produced, this fantasy scrolling beat-'em-up features beautifully clean cartoon-style visuals and some highly entertaining features. These include the ability to cook your enemies in a microwave oven, flatten them under an animal stampede or simply assault them with an overweight breakdancing genie. It's an utterly barmy concept, but somehow it actually works. As the levels progress you get to fight against some dubious-looking backdrops, but there's no denying that it makes for an unforgettable gaming experience. *PuLiRuLa* was originally released in Japan for the Saturn and PSone and now goes for a pretty penny.
Expect to pay: £60-£80
Home conversions: Sega Saturn, PSone and PS2 *Taito Memories Joukan* (Japan only)



RAYFORCE (1994 – F3 SYSTEM) This great shooter is the prequel to 3D-polygon blaster *RayStorm*. Its key play feature is its 'lock-on' system, which lets you to take out multiple foes in one go, and leads to some exciting boss battles. Add some of the F3's sprite and background zooming, a simultaneous two-player mode, and a great Zuntata soundtrack and you've got another Taito classic.
Expect to pay: £50-£75
Home conversions: Saturn and Xbox *Taito Legends 2*



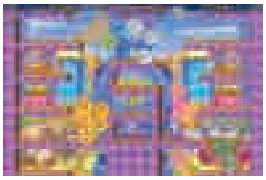
LIGHTBRINGER AKA DUNGEON MAGIC (1994 – F3 SYSTEM) This isometric dungeon romp seems to be Taito's answer to Capcom's classic *Dungeons & Dragons* scrolling arcade beat-'em-ups, and although it arguably doesn't quite offer the same amount of depth as *Tower Of Doom* or *Shadow Over Mystara* it's well worth a play through. Similar in design to Climax's *LandStalker*, with a multitude of block-moving and switch-pulling puzzle elements, it's one for the more cerebral arcade battlers and makes for a very good two-player game. Some of its bosses are rather impressive creations as well and everything is animated to an extremely high standard. It does get rather samey after a while, but still makes a nice alternative to the likes of *Golden Axe*.
Expect to pay: £50-£60
Home conversions: PS2 and Xbox *Taito Legends 2*



DARIUS GAIDEN (1994 – F3 SYSTEM) You have to sympathise with Taito's *Darius* team, seeing as the multiple-route structure of its games must require around four times as much hard graft as the average shoot-'em-up. *Darius Gaiden* is no different, with 26 long, branching game stages and 20 'Huge Battleship' bosses. This third arcade instalment of the fish-busting arcade shooter franchise is quite possibly one of the trippiest 2D shoot-'em-ups ever created, with a crazy operatic-rock soundtrack from Taito's in-house band, Zuntata, and some truly psychedelic backgrounds. Check out the first stage boss 'Golden Ogre' for a incredibly impressive showcase of the F3's hardware sprite-scaling abilities.
Expect to pay: £75-£80
Home conversions: Sega Saturn, PSone, PC, PS2 and Xbox *Taito Legends 2*



ELEVATOR ACTION RETURNS (1994 – F3 SYSTEM) One of the best arcade sequels of Taito's career, *Elevator Action Returns* takes the classic gameplay of the 1983 original, *Elevator Returns*, and ramps up the action, gunplay and overall body count to *Die Hard* levels. There's also a nod to *Impossible Mission* as you guide your agile somersaulting secret agent through the levels in an attempt to defuse a series of bombs against the clock. Two players can now join in the action simultaneously, and this time around combat is spread across tower blocks, airports, oil rigs and sprawling underground enemy lairs. The environments are incredibly detailed, the animation is absolutely superb, and there are also some very fine set-piece moments to savour.
Expect to pay: £75-£80
Home conversions: Sega Saturn, PS2 and Xbox *Taito Legends 2*



BUBBLE SYMPHONY AKA BUBBLE BOBBLE 2 (1994 – F3 SYSTEM) *Bubble Symphony* is a superbly crafted update of the classic original, even though it's not actually remotely close to being the second arcade game in the series (it's more like the fourth (see our ridiculously in-depth article about the *Bubble Bobble* franchise in issue 28). However, this meant Taito had a bit of practice to get it right, and with its varied branching 'worlds', new 'charge'-able bubble artillery, *Space Invaders*-homage levels and lush hand-drawn backgrounds it's arguably one of Bub and Bob's finest hours. Of the two F3 system *Bubble Bobble* games, this is the one to plump for, as in the subsequent *Bubble Memories* everything unexpectedly goes to pot.
Expect to pay: £75-£100
Home conversions: Sega Saturn, PSone and Xbox *Taito Legends 2*

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Dead Connection (gangster-themed arena shooter), *Super Space Invaders '91* (excellent *Invaders* update), *Space Invaders '95* (comic *Invaders* update), *Twin Cobra 2* (shoot-'em-up), *Gekirindan* (shoot-'em-up), *Puchi Carat* (versus *Breakout* clone), *Cleopatra Fortune* (excellent puzzle game), *Puzzle Bobble 2* (classic Bub and Bob puzzler), *Landmaker* (highly original god game/puzzle cross-over)



» The F3 system, marketed as 'Cybercore' in the US, was available for arcade operators in both kit and full-cabinet forms.

games would also see a significant rise in popularity due to their evocative chip-based soundtracks by members of Taito's in-house music collective Zuntata.

When *Final Fight* reinvigorated the scrolling beat-'em-up in 1989, Taito was quick to counter with its new F2 technology. Titles like *Growl* and *The Ninja Kids* were fairly derivative pastiches of Capcom's brawler, but the quirky *PuLiRuLa* deserves mention for its particularly surreal and unique take on the genre. Round about the same time Taito's hardware development team were also hard at work on F2's successor. In 1992 a brand new scrolling beat-'em-up, *Arabian Magic*, was released as the debut game on the F3 system. Marketed as 'Cybercore' in the US (where it was available for purchase either as a kit or in full arcade cabinet form) and billed as the industry's first 32-bit hardware platform, from a technical perspective F3 was truly impressive for its time. Engineered around Motorola's then-new 68EC020 CPU, which would later be used in the Amiga 1200 and CD32, it outclassed even Capcom's powerful 68000-based CPS-2 arcade technology. F3 could display 17 million colours, although most releases merely doubled the F2 board's palette, using display modes of up to 8192 colours on screen. Its audio capabilities were remarkable, with a separate MC68000 CPU dedicated as a sound processor, utilising advanced wave-table based audio synthesis provided by the on-board Ensoniq sound chip.

The new F3 system was cartridge-based, very much like Capcom's CPS-2 arcade hardware. Arcade operators could purchase the system motherboard and the games separately, as well as being able to part exchange old game cartridges for new releases. The system built spectacularly on F2's already advanced capabilities with powerful sprite scaling, rotation and hardware scrolling as standard, and alpha blending for true transparency effects. *Arabian Magic*'s use of sprite zooming and rotation set it apart from Capcom's myriad scrolling fighting games on the CPS-1 system, which by now was nearing the end of its life in arcades. *Darius Gaiden* integrated abundant visual trickery such as background warping and advanced raster colour effects, which had been pioneered in *Metal Black*. Other F3 shoot-'em-ups such as *RayForce* and *Twin Cobra 2* were notable for their use of sprite scaling and pseudo-3D zooming backgrounds.

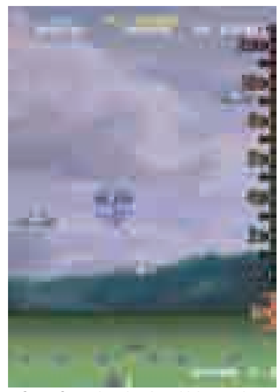
The F2 system, now also in its final years of commercial life, received two last worldwide releases in 1992. *Dead Connection*, a gangster-themed arena shooter featuring multiple layers of destructible scenery, drew inspiration from Williams' *Smash TV*. The versus-fighter *Dino Rex* featured digitised characters and pre-dates Midway's similar *Primal Rage* by a good two years.

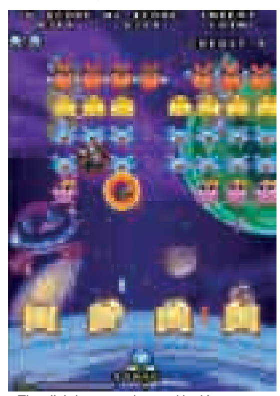
The F3 system hardware hosted many of Taito's most acclaimed arcade titles during its six year production life span, including four iterations of Taito's famous *Puzzle Bobble* (aka *Bust-A-Move*) series, two official *Bubble Bobble* arcade games, and a proliferation of original 'cute' puzzle titles. But given its era, on the cusp of the 3D fighting-game revolution, the dedicated 2D F3-hardware wasn't nearly as successful in the Western markets as it was in both Japan and Asia, and the system is perhaps best remembered nowadays for the outstanding 32-bit console conversions of some of its finest games, such as *Bubble Symphony*, *Liquid Kids*, *Elevator Action Returns* and *Darius Gaiden*. Indeed, many of the above games were arcade perfect and often included extras and it's little wonder that many of them now go for high prices on the likes of eBay. The final F3 release, *Landmaker*, was released in 1998, marking the end of the system's six-year production run. Taito would shift the focus for successive arcade product into the realm of 3D, with its G-NET system and titles such as *G Darius* and *Psychic Force*, but the 2D excellence of the F2/F3 arcade hardware titles remain a timeless testament to one of the company's most fruitful development periods.

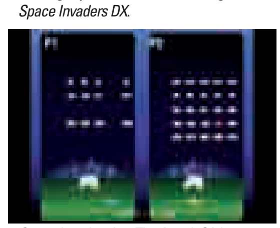
"THE F3 SYSTEM HOSTED MANY OF TAITO'S MOST ACCLAIMED ARCADE TITLES DURING ITS SIX YEAR PRODUCTION LIFE SPAN"

THE INVADERS RETURN

F-series hardware hosted three different iterations of *Space Invaders*, most notably *Super Space Invaders '91* and *Space Invaders '95*, a humorous parody, *Parodius*-style, of the *Invaders* series. *Space Invaders DX* was an interesting 'classic' update of the franchise featuring several different versions of the original 1978 game as well as a new split-screen two-player Versus mode.


» *Super Space Invaders '91*, which was also known as *Majestic Twelve*.


» The slightly more advanced looking *Space Invaders DX*.


» *Space Invaders '95: The Attack Of the Lunar Loonies*. Yet another sequel.

TAITO F-SERIES HARDWARE

GAME HIGHLIGHTS CHRONOLOGY: F1/F2 SYSTEM HARDWARE

1989
Cameltry
Don Doko Don
Final Blow
Mega Blast
Thunder Fox

1990
Ah Eikou No Koshien
Football Champ aka Hat Trick Hero
Growl aka Runark
Gun Frontier
Liquid Kids aka Mizubaku Adventure
The Ninja Kids
Super Space Invaders '91 aka Majestic Twelve

1991
Drift Out aka Drive Out
Metal Black
PuLiRuLa
Solitary Fighter
Dead Connection
Dino Rex
Euro Champ '92

1994
Quiz Crayon Shinchan 2

F3 SYSTEM HARDWARE

1992
Arabian Magic
Riding Fight
Ring Rage
Taito Cup Finals aka Hat Trick Hero '93

1993
Grid Seeker
Prime Time Fighter aka Top Ranking Stars
Super Cup Finals

1994
Dungeon Magic aka Light Bringer
Bubble Bobble 2 aka Bubble Symphony
Darius Gaiden/Darius Gaiden Extra Version
Elevator Action 2 aka Elevator Action Returns
Global Champion aka Kaiser Knuckle
International Cup '94 aka Hat Trick Hero '94
RayForce aka Gunlock
Space Invaders DX
Taito Power Goal aka Hat Trick Hero '95

1995
Bubble Memories: The Story of Bubble Bobble 3
Bust-A-Move Again aka Puzzle Bobble 2
Gekirindan
Puzzle Bobble 2X
Space Invaders '95 aka Akkanvader

1996
Cleopatra Fortune
Puzzle Bobble 3
Twin Cobra 2 aka Kyukyoko Tiger 2

1997
Arkanoid Returns
Pop 'n' Pop
Puchi Carat
Puzzle Bobble 4

1998
Landmaker

Credits: Board images courtesy of System16.com

THE CLASSIC GAME

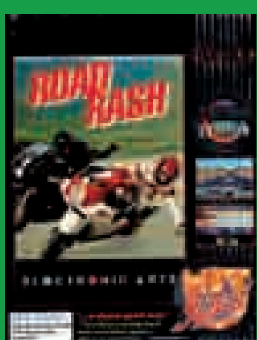
ROAD RASH

Electronic Arts took road rage to new dizzying heights with its violent Super Hang-On-style racer. Stuart Hunt puts mettle to a pedal, a fist through a helmet visor and gets aggressive after contracting a nasty bout of Road Rash

IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **RELEASED:** 1991
- » **GENRE:** RACING
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID





» The ET remake eventually reached its final day of shooting.

If there's one thing that grates me as a gamer it's elastic-band physics. It's just a lazy and unfair method of trying to keep a videogame 'exciting'.

As anyone who's completed the ridiculous final level on *Driver* will appreciate, it's not 'exciting' at all. It's just an infuriating physic that's predominantly plonked into driving games to allow a computer opponent that you've buried into a building at 90 miles an hour to miraculously re-materialise from a side road, clip your wing mirror and send you rocketing into the stratosphere. Mario Kart 64 is another fine example. It's not clever and we don't like it.

I've lost count of the number of times I've sent Toad careering over a cliff with a well-timed red shell, witnessed myself collect a batch of speed-boosting mushrooms and used them instantly, only for the annoying boy fungi to overtake me two seconds later. You might be beginning to wonder where I'm going with all this digression, in fact, I'm starting to wonder myself. Ahhh, *Road Rash*, that's right. Well the point I'm trying to make is *Road Rash* is a game that pulls at that elastic-band physic so much it snaps.

In *Road Rash*, when you cruise past someone on the tarmac and launch a fist into their temple, they go down like a sack of spanners and, more importantly, they stay down. None of this Lakitu cloud fishing-rod malarkey, or God stepping in to pick you up and supplant you on the track a few yards further on from the collision. Nope, when bikers fall to the floor the little position tally drops a digit, and your opponents



» Some of the collisions will see your driver landing in the next state.



» Yep, that's definitely gonna sting.



» "Woohoo! Yeah 15th place, eat my shorts Grubb!"

have to dust themselves off and walk to their smashed, scratched wrecks with a probable dislocated shoulder. So bless you Electronic Arts, I know you've come in for a lot of stick over the years, but hey, at least you went and made a racing game that, admittedly, borrowed almost 98 per cent of its gameplay from *Super Hang-On*, but look, *you* added the fighting, and the police, and invented the names Griff, Gruff, Benon and Larry, and yes, *you* can be seen to be setting a great example of how to get competition AI absolutely spot on in the racing genre.

To sum up *Road Rash*, it could best be described as a *Fight Club* road trip, or maybe even the videogame version of that Ice Cube action film *Torque,* (you know that really bad one)had its director actually decided to direct any action into it. It has a lovingly simple concept: race from point A to point B, by either adhering to the conventional MotoGP rules of racing, or by adopting the Queensbury Rules method. Of course, the game really doesn't hide which category of racing style it would prefer you use. After all, the game's called *Road Rash*, which is the colloquial term given to a tarmacian carpet burn, so we can gauge it's probably expecting you to spend a bit of time apart from your bike.

But perhaps my favourite thing about the game, the absolute greatest thing about it, is that it always reminds me of that awful five-minute videogame challenge show *Head To Head*, which aired on Sky television back in the Nineties. It was hosted by videogame veteran Violet Berlin and pitted two kids against each other for the lame prize of going into school the following day and receiving an hours worth of notoriety from their chums. Of course, apart


» They be on a relaxing Sunday afternoon drive, but you can bring them into the action, too; by smashing up their nice yellow car.

from 2D beat-'em-ups, there's not much variety in two-player videogame spats that fit inside a five-minute gap, so the producers had no choice but to use their imagination. This creativity led them to having nearly every other episode feature a duel on *Road Rash II*, but for me that made the show more bearable. After you looked past Violet's white, anime haircut, watching those two kids frantically beat each other up using baton-wielding bikers

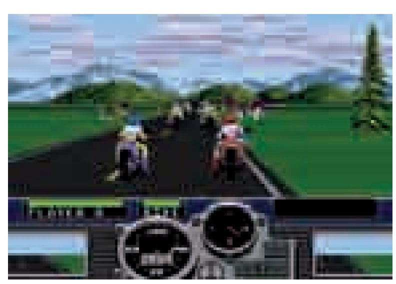
WHEN YOU CRUISE PAST SOMEONE AND LAUNCH A FIST INTO THEIR TEMPLE, THEY GO DOWN AND THEY STAY DOWN

was pure telly gold.

The irony of course was, like *Head To Head*, there appears to be very little reason or point to *Road Rash*'s narrative. So, in these instances, I always find it best to try to have a stab at lending my own plotline. Mine was imagining that our poor avatar was intentionally left out of the memo loop about correct attire before race day. Consequently, everyone turns up to the race in blue and yellow leathers, with the exception of your chap who's dressed as the red Power Ranger. Try supplanting this plot idea into your head when you play it, it really heightens the gameplay and allows you to sympathise with your rider a lot more. My theory that your rider is solely participating in the race with intentions of dishing out some retribution is further backed by the fact that whatever position he eventually finishes in a race he will always wave his hands jubilantly in the air. Does that really sound like the reaction of someone who's racing to win?



» "And, as you can see from the replay Bob, that this talented young rookie catches the ball before landing in the end zone."

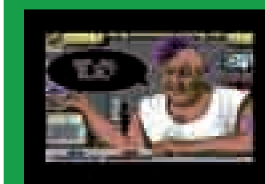

» It's quiet at the start line, but it's all going to end in tears.

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

M.U.L.E.
SYSTEMS: VARIOUS PLATFORMS
YEAR: 1983

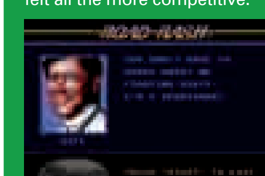
SKATE OR DIE (PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: VARIOUS PLATFORMS
YEAR: 1987

THE SIMS
SYSTEMS: PC
YEAR: 2000



EGGS AND RASHERS MAKE A 3DO-MLETTE

Two *Road Rash* sequels appeared on the Mega Drive and both would subtly tweak at the action by adding new locales and weapons. The biggest shift in the series would emerge in 1995. Released late in the 3DO's life, *Road Rash* was a re-invention of the Mega Drive classic that kicked the cartoon look into the gutter in favour of gritty, digitised visuals. Battling it out across a fully 3D environment, the game would replicate perfectly the feel of being a road hog, speeding across the road with your carburettor chugging out smoke and pieces of broken visor and skull entwined in your greasy mop. Couple this with the unwelcoming ambience of its scummy, between-race bars, where you could wax lyrical with some of the competition's super-deformed giant fleshy eggs, and your time tarmac-duelling with the circus freaks felt all the more competitive.







A WHOLE DIFFERENT BALL GAME





STREET FIGHTER II, SPACE INVADERS AND DEFENDER – ALL CLASSIC VIDEOGAMES. BUT WHAT ABOUT THEIR PINBALL COUNTERPARTS? STUART CAMPBELL TELLS YOU EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW



Some people – not as perceptive and intelligent as you, the good and wise readers of Retro Gamer – always say the same thing when anyone makes a game about pinball. "What's the point of making a pinball videogame?" they moan. "Pinball's about the physical sensations, and shoving the machine around in the pub."

These people are cretins, of course. Pinball is simply the mechanical equivalent of an FPS – hundreds of games use the same basic formula, the difference between a good one and a bad one is all about the level design, and the key to success is pinpoint shooting. (The *GoldenEye* pinball is pretty good, if you're wondering.) But what happens when you try to turn other types of videogames into pinball? (Smooth link – Ed)

One of the most interesting aspects of the early videogames was the attempt by publishers to translate the core aspects of their gameplay to other media. In a previous issue of **Retro Gamer**, for example, we looked at the early-Eighties board-game versions of some classics, of which there are far more than most people know (at least 20, going by the contents of my basement), and the same is true about pinball. A whole clutch of the iconic videogames from the golden era of the arcades also appeared in pinball form, with varying degrees of success and faithfulness to their source material. Tragically, nobody knows anything about them. What a bummer.

Wait! I do! (Phew – Ed)









» *Space Invaders* was still such an enormous name at the time that over 11,000 *Space Invaders* pinball machines were manufactured, a dizzyingly high number in the world of pinball.

SPACE INVADERS

(BALLY MIDWAY)
VIDEOGAME 1978, PINBALL 1980

In 1980, videogames were still seen by some in the arcade business as a flash-in-the-pan phenomenon, which hadn't yet proved itself to be the long-term successor of pinball. So when Taito's seminal *Space Invaders* took the West by storm as it had already done in Japan, US licensor Bally Midway decided to spin it off into its more traditional field of expertise, which was pinball. They even went to the trouble of concocting a story explaining the invaders' journey from screen to table, depicted in a four-page comic-book section of the lavish flyer. For some reason, though, in the process of crossing the arcade divide, Tomohiro Nishikado's octopus-like space monsters got transformed into creatures that looked uncannily similar to the terrifying Xenomorph from *Alien*. And the entire machine and playfield, while undeniably striking, look far more like the work of H R Giger than the iconic art of *Space Invaders*. (Indeed, Bally Midway was successfully sued over the steal.)

Nothing else from the videogame made it to the pinball either – no gameplay elements, and an attempt at the trademark heartbeat sound which would have any doctor rushing the patient to intensive care with sirens blaring – and generally this looks for all the world like an *Alien* pinball that got hastily rebadged when someone lost the movie licence. Pinball was still mechanically quite primitive at the time, lacking even such basic features as ramps (flippers didn't have the power to get the ball up them), and all *Space Invaders* had to work with was a pretty dull collection of bumpers and targets to light up, with a central horseshoe loop the closest thing to heady thrills on offer. It wasn't an auspicious start for the crossover, but things would improve pretty soon.

DEFENDER

(WILLIAMS ELECTRONICS)
VIDEOGAME 1980, PINBALL 1982

Williams Electronics, of course, started life as a pinball company, and the videogame version of *Defender* is actually full of sound effects that originated on Williams' pintables. The game returned the favour by acting as inspiration for a pinball that, while barely any more technically advanced than *Space Invaders*, does an infinitely better job of paying homage to its parent.

Defender the pinball makes use of almost every facet of the videogame, with Landers, Mutants, Pods, Bombers, Baiters and Swarmers all represented in one way or another, attacking in 'waves' just like their on-screen brethren. There's even a Smart Bomb (which functions in much the same way as its video counterpart) and a Reverse button, which ingeniously implements a pioneering manual version of the outlane 'kickback' feature found on almost every modern pin. The action is fast, furious and nearly as ferociously difficult as the legendarily challenging videogame version, and, of course, it's got all the same sound effects, since they were pinball sound effects in the first place. Just like its arcade daddy, the pinball *Defender* is an excellent game even today, but it would shortly have some serious competition in the videogame-pinball field.

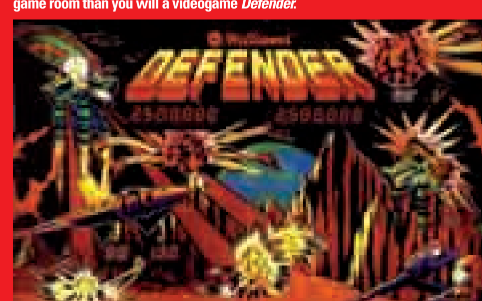
MR AND MRS PAC-MAN

(BALLY MIDWAY)
VIDEOGAMES 1981, PINBALL 1982

Just a few months after the debut of *Ms Pac-Man* in late 1981, the hungry yellow hero followed up on the story shown in its between-level cut-scenes and made



» Tragically, only 369 *Defender* pinball machines are known to have been made, so you'll have an even harder job tracking down a good-condition one for your game room than you will a videogame *Defender*.



A WHOLE DIFFERENT BALL GAME





an honest woman of her (the wedding photo is on the front of the machine's advertising flyer). Bally celebrated the happy occasion with the release of this thoroughly splendid and inventive pinball.

While the table itself is still basic 1982 drop-targets-and-bumpers stuff (except for one of the very first appearances in the modern pinball era of a plunger skill shot), the gameplay focuses on making shots to collect moves for the inspired '*Pac-Man*' game which takes place on the light grid in the centre of the table.

Using one flipper to cycle movement directions and the other to actually move, Pac is chased around the wall-less 'maze' by infamous red ghost Shadow (or, in this case, a red light), clearing levels by illuminating the whole grid. You can even earn 'power pills' on the pinball field, at which point the booming robotic commentator announces "Pac-Man Aggressive!" You can also chomp Shadow for bonus points, usually by catching him unawares and appearing from the other side of the screen, just like using the original's escape tunnels. The constant shifting between the pinball field and the light maze keeps the player on their toes, and both sections are hard enough to make the game constantly tense and exciting. Realising that it was on to something good, Bally Midway would, later the same year, take it to the next level.

BABY PAC-MAN

(BALLY MIDWAY)
VIDEOGAMES 1981, PINBALL 1982

Ah. Now we see why the Pacs got married so hastily. Just five months after the wedding (*Mr And Mrs* was released in May, with *Baby* following in October), the Pac-union produced the 'wocka-wocka' of tiny jaws. (Incidentally, the third videogame in the series, *Jr Pac-Man*, showed up in 1983 and depicted the Pac-sprog as primary-school age, so maybe Pacs just have an accelerated development and there was nothing indecent going on all along.)

The accompanying game, however, was even more startling than Junior's birth certificate. *Baby Pac-Man* was a natural extension of the design of *Mr And Mrs Pac-Man*, but it also had some big differences. This time the maze section was a proper full-blown videogame, with a joystick attached to the front of the cabinet as well as the traditional flipper buttons. The pinball field was shorter than usual, in order to keep the player's head close to the video screen sited above it, on which a full-scale *Pac-Man* game (with several different mazes) played out.

Hitting pinball targets earns power pills (poor Baby starts life in the maze with none, but can scarper through exits at the bottom to get to the pinfield) and speeds up Baby in the tunnels, and you can only lose lives on the videogame screen. (There are no outlanes, and letting the



LOCAL COLOUR ANECDOTE

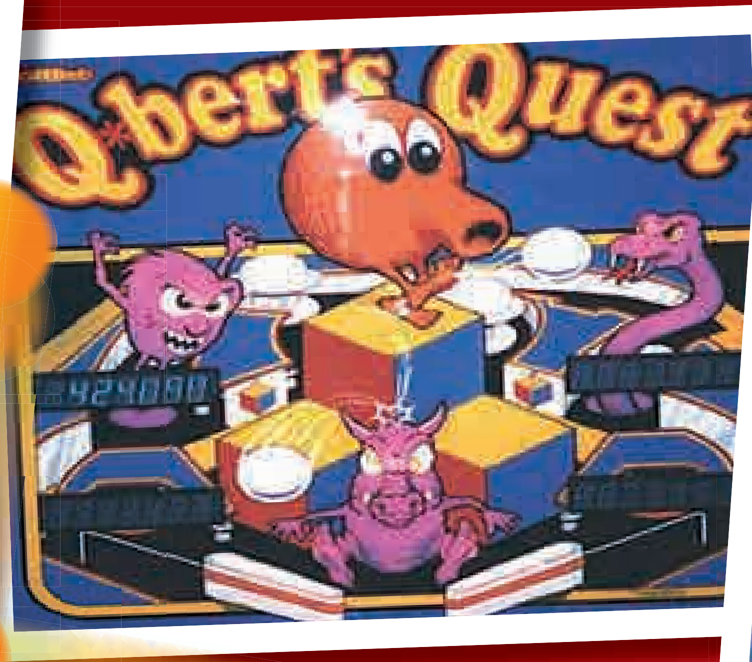
Mr And Mrs Pac-Man is so good that your reporter actually bought one, leading to a trail of disasters. Still living at home with his parents in about 1988, he crashed his mum's car when he went to view the well-worn machine at a dealer's warehouse, narrowly avoiding running over an old man walking his dog. When it was delivered he found it wouldn't go through any of the narrow hallways of the house – pinball machines are *much* bigger than they seem in the context of arcades or pubs – so it had to loom enormously in the patio for a few weeks, working intermittently and constantly bringing small neighbourhood children to the door. Then, one afternoon there was a spectacular bang and a flash and foot-high flames started to lick out of the top, at which point his parents (by now themselves dubbed 'Mr And Mrs Pac-Man' by the kids) ran out of patience and made him dejectedly sell it back to the dealer on pain of becoming homeless. Happily he only wanted to break it up for parts, so had no use for the beautiful painted backglass, which hangs on your reporter's living-room wall to this day.

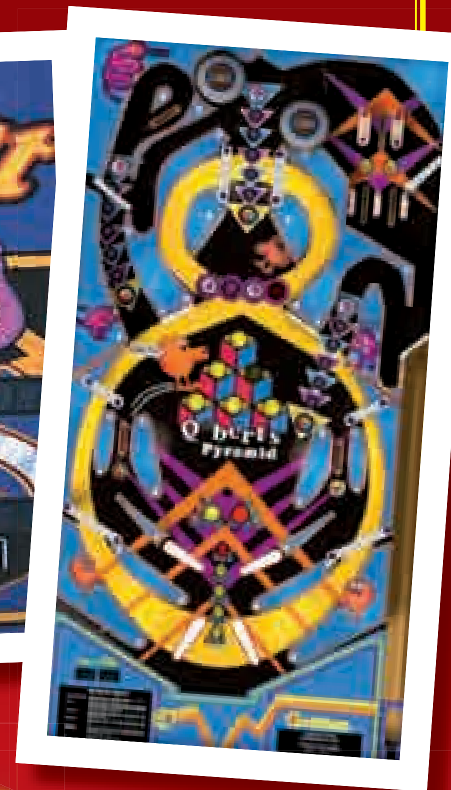


» Unlike *Defender* and *Space Invaders*, *Mr And Mrs Pac-Man* was both a great game and a big hit, selling more than 10,500 machines.



» A respectable 7,000 units of *Baby Pac-Man* were sold, but it didn't earn very well on site and never made it out of the USA. Bally Midway tried the hybrid formula once more, with 1984's *Granny And The Gators*, but then gave up.





» Even in 1983 the simple design and primary colours of *Q*Bert's Quest* looked a bit childish, and Gottlieb played safe by building fewer than 900 tables.

ball escape through the flippers merely dumps Baby back to the video screen, but blocks the exits to the pinball field until the screen is cleared of dots or a life is lost.)

Baby Pac-Man is a superb game in its own right, as well as being a very well-balanced hybrid of videogame and pinball. For this reviewer it's far more fun than either of its parents (the ghosts move much more unpredictably so it's not just about learning patterns), and the switching back and forth from video world to physical world gives it a real *Tron* vibe. It's a real high-water mark in imaginative arcade-game design, but it couldn't stop pinball from being ever more steadily muscled out of the amusement halls.

Q*BERT'S QUEST

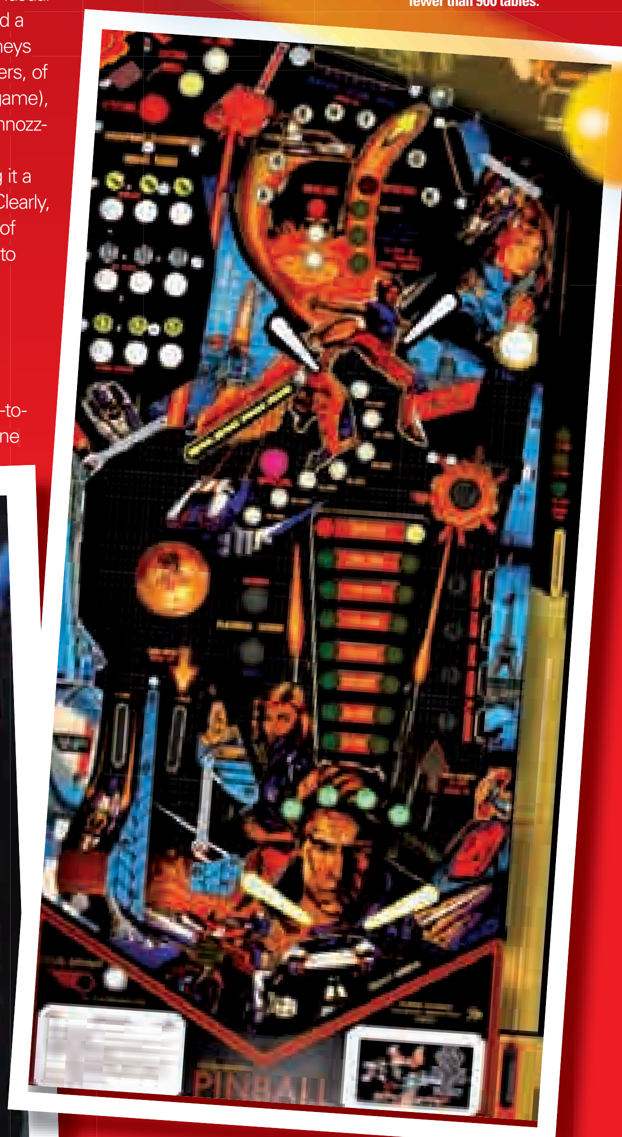
(GOTTLIEB)
VIDEOGAME 1982, PINBALL 1983

Meanwhile, other companies were trying different ways of being original in their attempts to bring videogame properties to the pinball universe. Still restricted to rudimentary 2D pinball tech, Gottlieb made a very creditable stab at capturing the pyramid-traversing antics of foul-mouthed, videogame big nose *Q*Bert*. A strange, looping table layout coupled with a pair of very unusual down-facing backwards flippers at the bottom did a surprisingly good job of simulating Q*Bert's journeys up and down his triangular world (the lower flippers, of course, acting as the flying saucers of the videogame), and lots of voice samples brought the orange schnozz-meister to life. It's a simple little game, but still diverting and cute, with the focus on loops giving it a very different feel to traditional pins of the time. Clearly, though, videogame publishers were running out of ways to transfer their successful video creations to the silver-ball field.

SPY HUNTER

(BALLY MIDWAY)
VIDEOGAME 1983, PINBALL 1984

The last attempt anyone made in the videogame-to-pinball genre for almost a decade, and the final one





» Just over 2,000 *Spy Hunter* pinballs were built, and you'd probably struggle to find 100 people who ever played one.

A WHOLE DIFFERENT BALL GAME



» Mario did pretty well in the pinball world, with the two versions of the machine combining to sell a little over 5,000 pieces.





to be tried with pre-ramps pinball tech, *Spy Hunter* was a very odd machine, with an almost unique off-centre playfield arrangement whereby there were no outlanes on the right, but two on the left. It's a spartan sort of game, with almost nothing in common with its video ancestor except the 'Peter Gunn' music, and after this everyone was clearly put off the whole idea of videogame-to-pinball ports for several years.

SUPER MARIO BROS

(GOTTLIEB)
VIDEOGAME 1985/1990, PINBALL 1992

As with so many things in the world of videogames, it was Mario who came to the rescue of a moribund genre, with the first videogame pinball of the modern age. Although called *Super Mario Bros*, this is really a pinball based on the *Super Mario World* universe (as can be seen by the typography and presence of Yoshi), and all the major characters are present and correct in an accessible and eventful game. The pinball field itself has little connection gameplay-wise to the original, but there's a video mode, where the dot-matrix scoreboard suddenly turns into a scrolling platform world and the player uses the flipper buttons to send Mario running and jumping across pits and enemies.

Later the same year Gottlieb released *Super Mario Bros Mushroom World*, which was basically the same game, but converted to a ticket-redemption machine and aimed at kids. The aiming was made easier by the conversion kit, which came with adjustable legs enabling the table to be ratcheted down low enough for five year olds to play it.



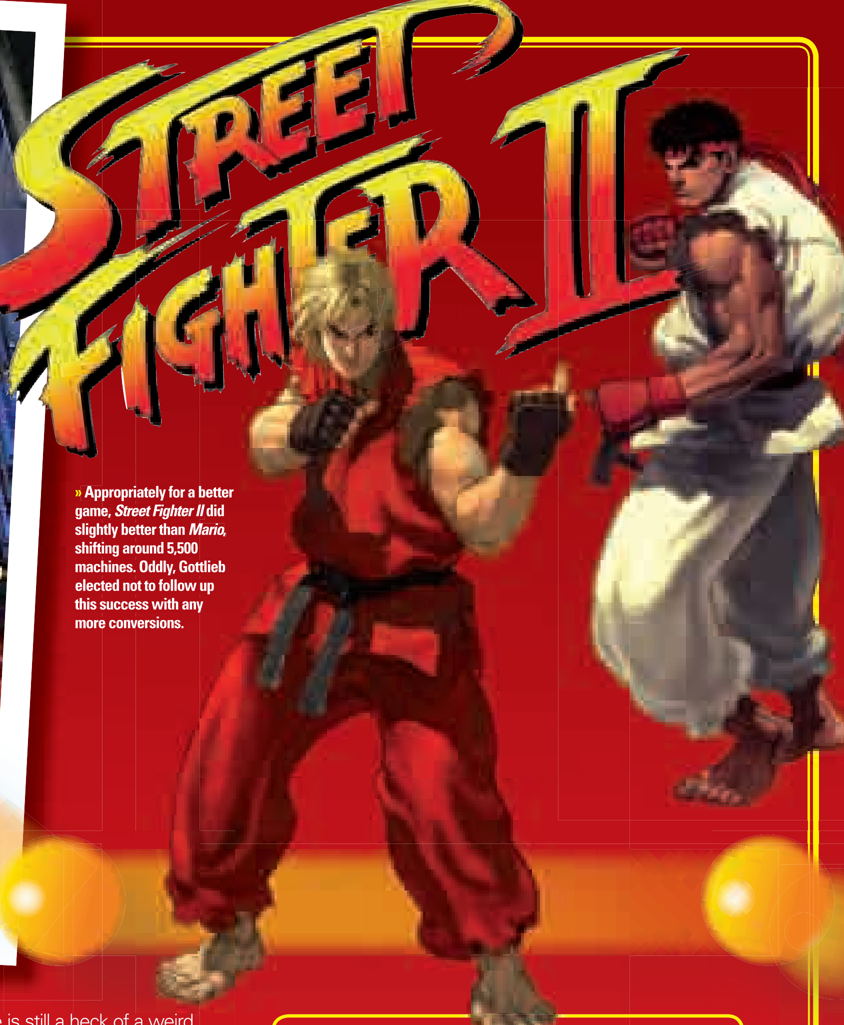
STREET FIGHTER II CHAMPION EDITION

(GOTTLIEB)
VIDEOGAME 1991, PINBALL 1993

Come to think of it, as well as being a sort of physical version of an FPS, pinball works well as an analogy for fighting games, too – you can exercise real skill, practising over and over until you can hit targets with pixel-perfect, frame-accurate precision and timing, or you can just bang frantically on the buttons whenever anything comes near you and hope you get lucky, which you quite often will.

Anyway, flushed with the relative success of *Super Mario Bros*, Gottlieb wasted little time in bringing another popular SNES property into pinball arcades. *Street Fighter II* is a brilliant pinball, full of little ties to the videogame, right down to a perpetually rotating flipper simulating Chun-Li's Spinning Bird Kick and a car-smashing bonus round, played out on a little mini-playfield complete with red plastic car. Features go off every ten seconds as you hit various combination shots to tackle all your favourite *Street Fighter II* combatants, but you'll have a tough job defeating all 12 opponents to get to the Champion Challenge round, where you have to take down all 12 again in a sort of





» Appropriately for a better game, *Street Fighter II* did slightly better than *Mario*, shifting around 5,500 machines. Oddly, Gottlieb elected not to follow up this success with any more conversions.

boss rush to net a 500,000,000 bonus. It's not all that uncommon to still come across *Street Fighter II* and *Super Mario Bros* tables now – assuming you're somewhere that has pinball at all – and that's testament to just how well designed the games are.

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON

(STERN ELECTRONICS)
VIDEOGAME 1999, PINBALL 2002

Almost another decade passed before anyone attempted to follow *Street Fighter II* from the videogame world to the pinball one, and when it did it was one of the least obvious suspects. Since Stern revived pinball for the new millennium, it's drawn on every corner of popular culture for its subject matter (Playboy, *Family Guy*, *Terminator 3*, Monopoly, *The Sopranos*, Elvis), and the inclusion of a videogame in this A-list of modern icons is a sure sign of how mainstream gaming is finally becoming, culturally speaking. A sim/strategy game is still a heck of a weird choice (you'd have thought *Quake* or *Half-Life*, maybe), and unsurprisingly the only real link to the game is that the ball rides some ramps that are a bit like rollercoasters.

So, er, a bit of a weak ending on this one. Sorry. Nevertheless, we've learned that videogames have made a pretty respectable showing in at least two other fields of gaming (board games and pinball), and that in the hands of skilled designers it's possible to translate identifiable gameplay elements across to what at first glance seems a completely incompatible discipline. Join us next time, when videogames attempt to expand even further and colonise an even more difficult territory – the world of the fruit machine. Conceal your excitement if you dare.

*Thanks to the Internet Pinball Machine Database for sales stats.

PLAY IT NOW ON

There wouldn't, of course, be much point in telling you about all these games if there wasn't some way you could enjoy them today, and that's where Visual Pinball comes in. A superb pinball construction kit for the PC, it can be used in conjunction with a pinball spin-off of MAME in order to create extremely authentic emulations of hundreds of real-life pinball machines. Visual Pinball can be found at www.randydavis.com/vp, while Visual PinMAME is located at pinmame.retrogames.com.





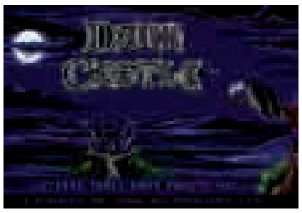
» Few sales figures are available for Stern's recent line-up, possibly because most of them are still very much ongoing catalogue items. But estimates for *Rollercoaster Tycoon* come in somewhere around the 2,500 area.

retro shamer

Dark Castle

POP QUIZ HOTSHOTS: WHAT DO YOU GET WHEN YOU MIX DONKEY KONG, ELECTRONIC ARTS AND DIRK THE DARING, HAD HE BEEN REPEATEDLY DROPPED ON HIS HEAD BY GIANT STEP-PARENTS UP UNTIL THE DAY OF HIS 23RD BIRTHDAY?

IN THE KNOW



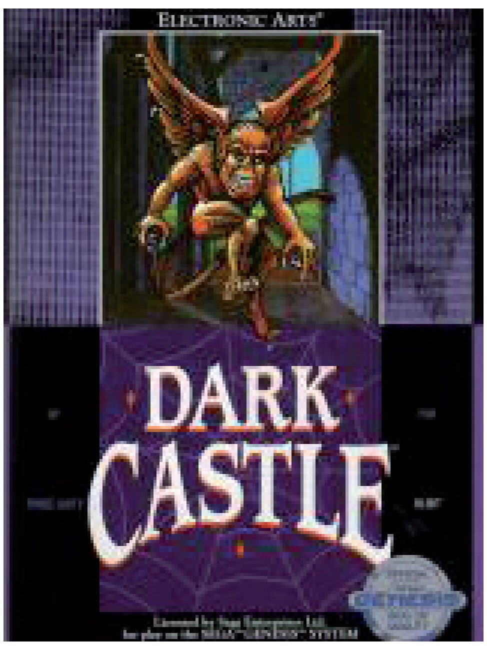
» **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS

» **DEVELOPER:** SILICON BEACH SOFTWARE

» **RELEASED:** 1991 (MEGA DRIVE)

» **GENRE:** PLATFORM

» **WHY PLAY THIS WHEN YOU CAN PLAY:** DONKEY KONG



FIRST IMPRESSIONS

I once entered a competition to think up the most boring image imaginable, then to draw it on some paper. After four hours I drew an empty pint glass and felt sure I'd win. However, I came second. I was shocked, especially as the guy who beat me had submitted a picture of a flying demon in front of a castle. What made it more upsetting was that the winner would get the chance to have their sketch used for the box art of an upcoming EA game called *Dark Castle*. I was so upset that I ran home and never saw the winning drawing, until I was out shopping one day and noticed the game for sale. Hands down, I have to hand it to the guy, he fully deserved to win.



» Ha ha, did you just see that? He slipped over nothing and landed on his face. Utter, utter hilarity.

Now, the peculiar thing about *Dark Castle* is that it's one of the few games where every one of its sucky elements, of which there are plenty, feels strangely intentional. Every annoying aspect feels like it was discussed, incorporated and signed off. While it is highly unlikely that this could very well be the first intentionally bad videogame ever created, the scary thing is that even if Electronic Arts was hoping to germinate some intentional god-awful sucky nightmare for Mega Drive owners, its efforts are still grossly overshadowed by Sega's *Last Battle*.

If it was hoping to release a nostalgic *Flashback*-cum-*Donkey Kong* precision platform-type game then it monumentally failed in every single way that it could conceivably fail. But, I honestly, to this day, believe that's what it was actually intending to do. So, having established that this game appears to share a few loose similarities with Nintendo's prolific simian platformer, why is it so damn awful?

Well, to be honest, it's difficult to know exactly where to start. This is a game where the main character looks like Rick Parfitt (from Status Quo) dressed as a peasant. And as if it wasn't cruel enough to drag poor old Rick into the mix and force him to wear bright lime-green tights, the developers also decided to make his default graphic: him in mid-step, with his arm outstretched in the manner of a handshake – which I can only imagine was intended to give him a proactive and friendly quality.

For his entire quest – which involves battling strange chunky lightning-bolt firing zombies, gimp-masked whipping grunts and bats that turn on and off their collision detection at random intervals, plus a final encounter with the most generically named villain imaginable – our poor sap has been armed with a pocketful of rocks. And to add 'rock salt' to injury, the method in which he attacks happens to be the most ridiculous-looking animation, not only in a videogame, but in the entire annuls of drawing. It's a slow, laborious method of angular attack,



» Not really a great place to drop a cat.



» The most interesting section of the entire game involves washing a dragon.



» Funny *Space Invaders* parody. Really funny, if you're a bat.



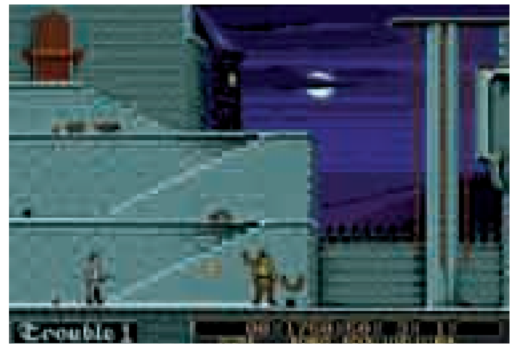
» "It's a wonderful night for a moon dance."

where you must use your little man's arm to judge trajectory. And when you attack a rat scuttling along the ground, and then watch him raise his arm to throw a rock at an enemy bat that's flapping in the air, it looks ridiculous, in fact, it looks far worse than that. It looks like your avatar is trying to land a plane by throwing small chunks of masonry at it.

Thankfully you have four levels to work through, and because the developers obviously cottoned on to how frustratingly difficult the game is, they give you the chance to play through them in any order so as to give your subconscious the impression that it's actually getting somewhere. It's a game where everything will kill you, even enemies that seemingly haven't actually been coded yet. Yep, walk across the drawbridge stage, where bats hover and attack in a weird *Galaxian* manner, and watch as your hero seemingly falls over nothing. And it's not a bug or a glitch; there are plenty of these stupid instances littered around the game where you'll witness your hero trip over thin air. I can only guess that the developers felt the addition of random slapstick deaths might cause gamers to burst into hysterical furore, but, as you might expect, it simply has the adverse effect; simply supplant hysterical furore for hysterical fury. We might have looked past this had EA actually packaged the game with a white board marker to mark on your television where these invisible threats are located, but sadly it didn't.

retro shamer

POINTLESS PART



Steps are never much bother in videogames. Yes, they sucked in *Castlevania II*, but if there's any issue it's that getting on them can be fiddly. Once you're on them you can usually breathe a sigh of relief. Unfortunately, neither of these factors relate to *Dark Castle*. Every aspect of stair ascending is carpeted with danger. Watch as your character loses his footing and falls to his death like a timid old-age pensioner with a step phobia. You'll become wary of the steps as you realise what it is they represent: Russian roulette progression.

When *Mean Machines* reviewed *Dark Castle* they said it was so bad it reminded them of a time when 'no one could program the Amiga properly'. It speaks volumes that the game was so bad that reviewers couldn't actually bring themselves to accept that the game was actually running on the Mega Drive. Now that is bad.



» Decisions, decisions. Frustrating nightmare room one or frustrating nightmare room two?

[A WORD FROM THE MAIN CHARACTER]

Hello, Prince Duncan here. Hero, warrior, rock fan and official Rick Parfitt lookalike. If it's okay with you, I'd really like to take this opportunity to plug my new business. If there are any Status Quo fans looking for me to attend a private shindig, please get in touch. I can't play the guitar, or sing, but I can stand in a corner and act Parfitt-like. I can also sign autographs, not Rick's though, as that would be illegal. Oh, I also have this neat little party trick where I walk up the stairs, roll backwards and die. I know what you're thinking, this guy's just too much to handle, could we afford to have such a crazy cat at our wedding reception or 70th birthday party? All I can say to that is probably, guys… probably.



"EVERY ANNOYING ASPECT FEELS LIKE IT WAS DISCUSSED, INCORPORATED AND SIGNED OFF"

TREASURE ISLAND DIZZY

Two brothers. Two months of programming. One bedroom. One life. Treasure Island Dizzy was the second game to star everyone's favourite egg – but things didn't always go smoothly. David Crookes looks at how it all came together





IN THE KNOW



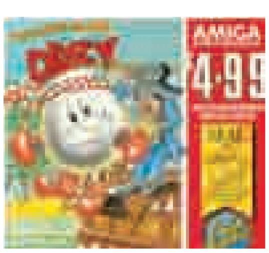
» **PUBLISHER:** CODEMASTERS

» **DEVELOPER:** THE OLIVER TWINS

» **RELEASED:** 1987

» **GENRE:** ADVENTURE

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1



As sure as eggs are eggs, and England will lose on penalties, a successful game will throw up a sequel. And in 1987, following a summer in which Philip and Andrew Oliver had endured two months of self-imposed house arrest, virtually handcuffed to their computers, *Treasure Island Dizzy* was almost done. That, however, was when they realised something was wrong.

It wasn't the fact that days had turned into nights with them barely noticing, nor was it the fact that they had rarely left their parents' house in all of that time ("I think our parents were quite worried about us," smiles Philip). No, something wasn't working quite as it should have been. And for those who played *Treasure Island Dizzy* at the tail end of the Eighties it was a problem that would, at that particular time, haunt their gaming life. It also had the potential to damage the *Dizzy* series before it had really got going.

"Right up until the last few days of development, *Treasure Island Dizzy* had the same number of lives as the original *Dizzy* game," says Philip. "But then we discovered a problem."

The original *Dizzy* game had five lives, however, *Treasure Island Dizzy* had just one. It made the game, by far, the most difficult of the whole series, although, in some sense, it also meant forward planning was key if you were to ever get to the end. That, however, wasn't the intention when the Olivers started to program the game.

"The one life was due to a logic bug," explains Philip. "We found that if the player put down an object underwater or on the far beach it was extremely easy to drown poor old Dizzy. He'd be reset to the beach but be unable to get the snorkel or the items left on the far beach – making the game impossible to complete. We were under a huge amount of pressure to deliver the game so we ran out of time to solve that problem. It left us with only one option – we had to remove the other lives."

It was a massive decision and it changed the whole game, from one of casually bouncing around solving puzzles to one which had you carefully working through the game, heart in mouth, not quite knowing whether you'd soon make a move that could send you to your death and force you to restart everything from the beginning.

Having spent two months solidly working on the game, it wasn't the outcome The Oliver Twins had wanted, but they just had to go with the flow. It was the first game they had created since graduating from Clarendon School in Trowbridge and so it was important for them to ensure their intended year out, before going to university, would be productive. They'd already teamed up with Richard and David Darling at Codemasters, and had achieved success with games such as *Super Robin Hood* so they wanted to try to explore their



» Hmm, there's not much you can do with mushrooms, a tube of toothpaste and a '*Sinclair Abuser*' mag, is there?



» Plunging into the water was life threatening, unless you had a snorkel to hand.

talents further and they decided to put together a business plan.

"We were proud of *Dizzy* but it was a 'slow burner' in terms of its success," recalls Philip. "We had to rely on word of mouth to make the sales and it took at least six months before we could say it had been a really successful game. Once it had, we knew we had to follow it up. It made sense."

The first thing they did was study the magazine reviews of the original game. "We always bought the magazines which contained reviews of our games and we made a big file of them," says Philip. "We still have them all today in our office. We always took on board critical comment, although, on the whole, the reviews of *Dizzy* were very positive. Our challenge was how to better it."

With that in mind, they decided to keep the familiar elements of the original *Dizzy* game – the cartoon-style graphics, simple controls and engaging gameplay – but they wanted to give the character a larger world to explore and so it was decided that a treasure island would be perfect. They created a backstory about *Dizzy* being on a round-the-world cruise and, in a lapse of judgement, using Long John Silver's collection of wooden legs as makeshift cricket stumps, an act which led to him walking the plank and finding himself stranded on a desert island. The aim of the game was to solve puzzles, collect a load of gold coins, reunite Dizzy with the Yolkfolk and lodge a complaint with the travel agent…

"The title needed to conjure up an interesting, exciting yet mysterious place – one that people would want to explore," says Philip. "We wanted to contrast the sequel with the original game and since that title had not featured a beach it made a great environment to use. 'Treasure Island' is also a name that is 'free to use' and it conjures up all sorts of possibilities."

With the story sorted, it was then time to crack on with the coding. As with the first game, the sequel was produced on the CPC 6128. This was because of its disk drive, which meant saving the progress made with the production was much easier. They also used Maxam, the best assembler/machine code compiler for the CPC.

To write the Spectrum version, they created a piece of software called the SPLINK (Spectrum and LINK) and, using a cable made by a friend, hooked the CPC and Spectrum together. They were then able to port the Spectrum code from the CPC to Sinclair's machine.

"We used the core engine of *Dizzy* and enhanced the base graphics," says Philip. "We had also developed a good world editor for the Amstrad which we used to build up the sprites for the backgrounds."

To keep up their motivation, the pair grabbed a bowl and threw a pile of Bourneville plain chocolate into it. They then placed it in between the two Amstrad CPC 6128s on which they worked side by side.

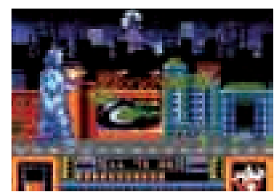
"Remember, it was just the two of us – Andrew and myself," says Philip. "We'd just finished sixth form and our friends had all gone to university but there we were, spending two months in my bedroom, working ridiculous hours to

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

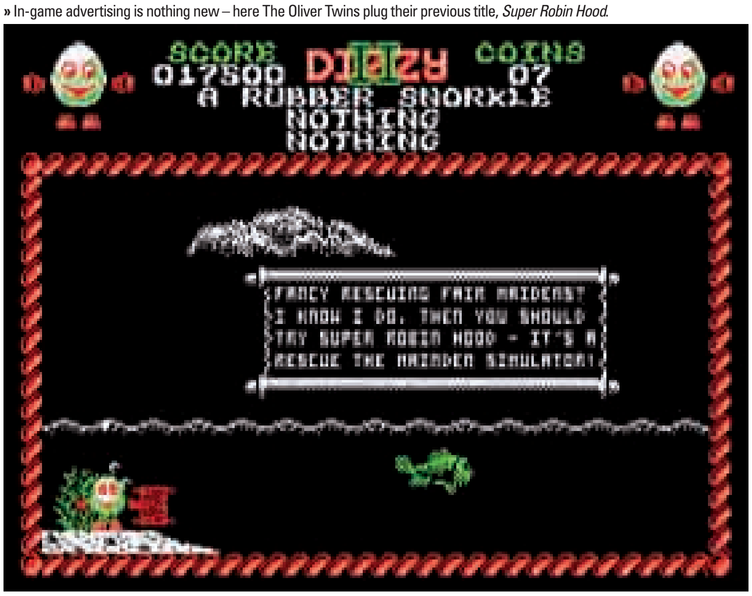
SUPER ROBIN HOOD
SYSTEM: AMSTRAD CPC, ZX SPECTRUM, C64, ATARI ST, AMIGA, NES
YEAR: 1985

GRAND PRIX SIMULATOR
SYSTEMS: AMSTRAD CPC, SPECTRUM, C64, ST, AMIGA
YEAR: 1986

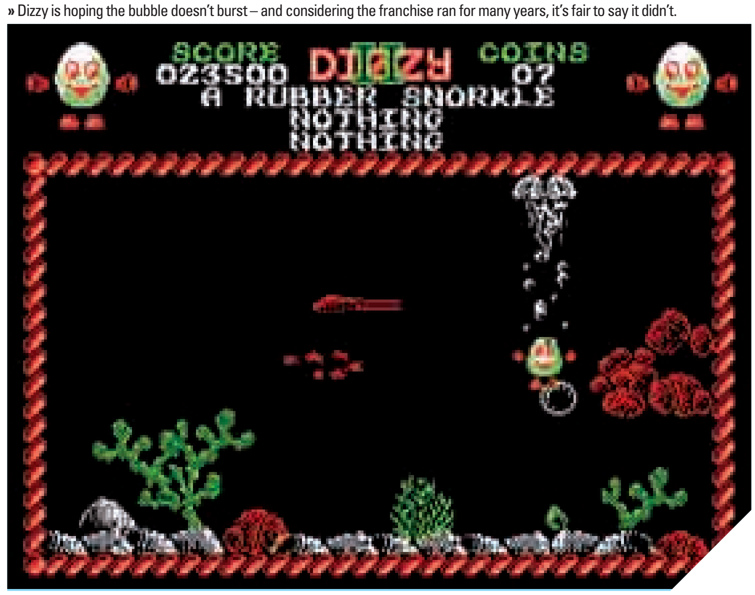
GHOSTBUSTERS II (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: AMSTRAD CPC, SPECTRUM, C64, ST, AMIGA
YEAR: 1988



» In-game advertising is nothing new – here The Oliver Twins plug their previous title, *Super Robin Hood*.



» Dizzy is hoping the bubble doesn't burst – and considering the franchise ran for many years, it's fair to say it didn't.



THE MAKING OF… TREASURE ISLAND DIZZY

SINCLAIR ABUSER

The magazines appeared to have a love-hate relationship with *Dizzy*. A preview in *Sinclair User* began, "Noooooooo! No more *Dizzy* games!" although a *Crash* review said it was, "a must for everyone's software collection." Whether *Sinclair User*'s dislike for the game led The Oliver Twins to include '*Sinclair Abuser*' magazine in *Treasure Island Dizzy* as a collectable object is not clear. "Err – I can't remember anything in particular about that," says Philip Oliver. "It is 20 years ago and I'll be honest a lot has happened since."

When dropped on the small pebble in the water to the right of the first screen, you would see an increase in your score. It had no other effect, however.

As an aside, *Commodore Format* infamously annoyed many readers when it printed a full map of *Treasure Island Dizzy* – and made no mention of where any of the coins were. Since collecting the coins was actually harder than completing the puzzles, this caused much pulling of hair.





» Many maps were produced for *Treasure Island* in magazines at the time, including this one in *Sinclair User*.

get *Treasure Island Dizzy* done in such a short amount of time."

Philip adds, "We'd draw up lists of code sections, or graphics. We'd then break up the tasks into approximately one-hour work chunks and, when we completed a chunk, we got a piece of chocolate. Having each other was definitely a bonus – we bounced ideas off each other, worked on solving problems together and managed to have a good laugh in the process."

Whereas games before *Dizzy* concentrated on 'arcade skills', which were essentially about speed and timing, the Oliver twins wanted to continue the new trend that had begun with their original egg-cellent adventure. "With the first *Dizzy* game we'd already reduced the level of arcade skills needed so that the gameplay was largely in favour of the puzzles. We thought this was one of the driving factors towards its success and felt we could take the puzzles further and reduce the reliance on arcade skills."

One of the biggest differences between *Dizzy* and *Treasure Island Dizzy*, however, was the introduction of the Yolkfolk, an idea that Philip had had – or at least thinks he had. "The Yolkfolk came out of various brainstorming sessions and discussions between Andrew and I," he says. "We've always worked so closely together, and bear in mind that we're twins! We so often think alike that sometimes it's hard to attribute exactly who did what. We were trying to create a cartoon world with a story, so meeting only enemies did not lead to a well-rounded story, so that's why we decided to add the Yolkfolk."

Those brainstorming sessions led to other innovations for the *Dizzy* series. Not content with merely tinkering with the success of the original game, they wanted to expand the world in which Dizzy bounced around and also wanted to give the players a constant challenge that would have them going constantly back for more.

"We were trying to squeeze as much gameplay into every screen as possible," says Philip. "So we'd design each screen with lots of hard to reach places, then we'd distribute all of the objects across them. But we found we had lots of really good places left with no reason



» Whenever Dizzy walks underwater he's followed by a stream of bubbles.

> "THEY WERE HAPPY TO LET US CRACK ON AND THEY'D PUBLISH OUR GAMES WHEN WE SAID THEY WERE DONE"
>
> ANDREW OLIVER, ON THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DARLING BROTHERS AT CODEMASTERS

» *Dizzy* also appeared on the NES and was looking mightily fine.



» The Amiga version of *Treasure Island Dizzy* was a beautiful-looking, colourful game.





» He's got nothing but a silly look on his face.



» Having only one life meant you had to be really careful especially when walking under traps. The idea was to jump.

for the player to visit. So we decided to add coins to give people a reason to go to those locations. Clearly this would have only meant 15 or so coins added, so, once we had placed these, we increased the number and spread them around everywhere so there was a more even distribution and more to play for."

As well as the presence of just one life, players also had to contend with the restrictive inventory system that didn't allow players to choose which object they wanted (which took a surprising amount of time to actually get used to). Whatever was at the top of the inventory list would be used. It once again meant the game required strategy and gamers had to decide what was needed and when. It ramped up the difficulty factor by another notch, and that was the Olivers' intention.

"The idea was to reduce the number of buttons and keep it easy to use. True, it meant that the player had to think carefully about the inventory and how it was used, but we felt this added a little to the strategy," explains Philip. "The player had to be more selective and think about which items to pick up – rather than picking everything up that he or she came across which was the norm in most games then."

By the time work had begun on *Treasure Island Dizzy*, the Olivers had been working with the Darling brothers for about a year and they spoke to each other around once a week. The Darlings were more than happy to leave the twins to their own devices, however. "Because our games sold so well they were happy to let us crack on and they'd publish our games when we said they were done," says Philip.

"WE WERE UNDER A HUGE AMOUNT OF PRESSURE TO DELIVER THE GAME… IT LEFT US WITH ONE OPTION – WE HAD TO REMOVE THE OTHER LIVES" PHILIP ON THE ONE LIFE PROBLEMS

The strategy worked. *Treasure Island Dizzy* outsold the first game and yet sales of the original *Dizzy* were largely unaffected. It surprised both the Olivers and the Darlings since it went against what usually happened when a sequel was introduced. Sales were proving so solid that a third outing was inevitable. The Olivers had, however, already been thinking about the third game while they were making the second.

"We had discussed ways of including something in the game which would set up another sequel, but it was hard to think how to link them and I can't remember any links we managed to achieve," says Philip. "The fact that we'd do a *Dizzy* game and then a simulator or something else before returning to *Dizzy* also opened the gaps up, which we thought was important to keep us sane and not cannibalise our own sales of the previous games."

Although the Olivers look back at the many mistakes in *Treasure Island Dizzy*, and kick themselves for making them, they remain philosophical given that they didn't cause any harm to the series as a whole and were part of the great learning curve.

"Of course we made loads of mistakes, but equally, we got lots of things right too, and put out a lot of great games in a short space of time," says Philip. "Andrew and I are very critical and very hard-working, so we were our biggest critics, but with all games, especially when the deadline arrived and the memory was full, it was time to 'let it go' and ship it. As they say, a great work of art is never finished just abandoned."

KERCHING!

The Oliver Twins were certainly very pleased with the sales of *Treasure Island Dizzy*.

"They were absolutely fantastic," enthuses Philip about the sequel's massive success. "*Dizzy*, the original, had been a bit of a slow burner – selling okay over a very long period of time. But when we released *Treasure Island Dizzy*, I think everyone that had bought *Dizzy* simply went out and bought *Treasure Island Dizzy* in the first week, because it made it hit number one instantly and stayed there for many, many weeks. We certainly knew at this point that *Dizzy* was a huge hit and that we would be able to repeat this. We knew that by creating more *Dizzy* games, they would sell really well. It had suddenly become a franchise."

Treasure Island Dizzy's monstrous success allowed the Olivers to continue the series with the next adventure being *Fantasy World Dizzy* which would be the final adventure actually created by Philip and Andrew. *Fantasy World Dizzy* is often seen as the ultimate *Dizzy* adventure. Philip says, "We were always trying to improve on the original *Dizzy* and, to be honest, I think the biggest step change was with *Fantasy World Dizzy*."

» If you type in "Dizzy is eggshellent," Hookjaw's ghost will magically appear*.



» On a roll – bouncing around the screen was a hallmark of the *Dizzy* franchise.



*Not actually true.



The history of... Christmas games

SEGA, SHENMUE, C64 AND COVERMOUNTS, STUART HUNT TAKES A LOOK AT CHRISTMAS IN GAMING WITH A FEATURE THAT HAS MORE TO CHEW OVER THAN A FROZEN SELECTION BOX OF TAR-BASED CONFECTIONS





If you consider December to be a stressful month, it could be worse; try having to contend with all the usual stress while, at the same, pushing a videogame out of your womb. For those poor souls working within the videogame industry Christmas is a hellish period of continual deadlines and mounting pressure.

December is a time of expense, a period when credit card companies rub their hands excitedly and numbers on bank statements hang around with hyphens. It's fair to say that it's the last page on the entire calendar that anyone would willingly walk away from employment. But that didn't stop developer Naughty Dog, after feeling the frequent and heavy contractions of giving birth to the highly anticipated *Crash Bandicoot 2*, losing a few team members over the Christmas period. And, unfortunately, this isn't a freak occurrence, it's known to happen a lot in the industry.

It's difficult to fathom the work that goes into a new videogame, let alone creating one within the space of a year. How much time would you really have to churn out a whole new appendage from scratch? Starting with 365 days, you would have to take out the weekends, leaving us 261 days, remove the holidays, say around 24 days and the hours for lunches, that's about 33 days. That leaves about 204 days in all. Now, remove the coffee making, the flirting, web surfing, toilet breaks, the brainstorming, the planning, the unnecessary field trips and the occasional office disruption and you'll find that you're probably left with around four days.

Christmas the videogame

Let's be honest, it requires anti-business acumen to develop a game about Christmas. A game about Christmas is like writing the biography of an *X Factor* finalist or bankrolling a documentary about 4 March 1975; it will undoubtedly be a product with little to no life span. It's the type of venture that would see a troupe of entrepreneurial developers become immediately beleaguered in *Dragons' Den* at the exact point 'product life cycle' was mouthed with aggressive nonchalance.

There have, however, existed games that were built around the Christmas theme and have stood up bravely to this thinking. Some, like Toaplan's fantastic



This is the last section of *The Official Father Christmas* game, just in case you were wondering. How realistic.

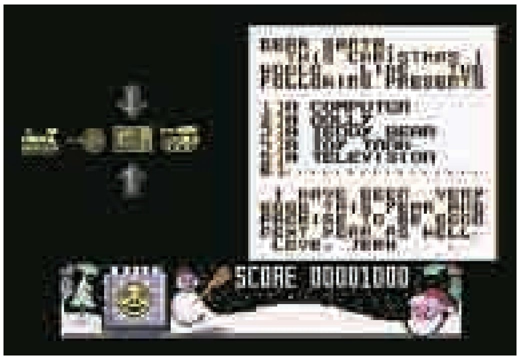
Snow Bros, did it subtly by dressing Ed the Duck in blue dungarees, cloning him, painting him white and calling one half Nick and the other Tom. And others like the awfully punned *Daze Before Christmas* allowed you to take the reigns of the jolly red tomato in an overly bright platform game. But the fusing of videogames and Christmas wasn't something that was introduced during the height of the 16-bit platform game. The two areas have been entwined for aeons, and never more predominantly than in the 8-bit era. The C64 boasts the biggest list of Santa games across any other format in the history of the world – including the NES, and that's a console that is aimed at kids and has a *Smash TV*-type game about religious food. Yes, if you want to become an avid collector of Christmas games then the C64 is probably the perfect place to start. So it would make perfect sense for us to kick off this Christmas retroinspection by looking back at a few of the peculiar Santa-themed games that appeared on the computer.

> FOR THOSE POOR SOULS WORKING WITHIN THE VIDEOGAME INDUSTRY CHRISTMAS IS A HELLISH PERIOD OF CONTINUAL DEADLINES AND MOUNTING PRESSURE

The Nightmares Before Christmas

Special Delivery: Santa Christmas Chaos, aka '*Santa Hates Poor People*' is a strange little game that found you taking to the sky in Santa's sleigh and doling out presents that fall from the sky. If Santa fails in his mission (by not collecting enough gifts) his punishment is to deliver them to the poor children of the world. The game paints a pretty snobbish picture of Santa, because rather than delicately drop the gifts down the chimneys of the deprived, and nestle them carefully under their probably stolen Christmas trees, he throws them off his sleigh with the hope that a few might land in the designated chimney drop zone. Should he nail his mission, however, the reward is the chance to deliver these gifts to affluent aristocrats living in stately homes. Annoyingly, these jerks are so filthy rich they don't actually need Santa or his wrapped wares, so will try to deter him by lighting their fireplaces and smoking him out. They also like to show off their wealth by owning chimneys the width of four caravans and storing three yellow ladders inside.

The next section of the game finds Santa descending these gargantuan chimneys and avoiding those



"The dolly is for my sister, honestly!"

On the 12 years of Christmas my developer gave to me

WE LOOK AT SOME OF THE GAMES RELEASED DURING THE RUN UP TO CHRISTMAS AND PICK A STANDOUT MOMENT FROM EACH. DID THEY LIVE UP TO THE HYPE?

2006 GEARS OF WAR
November 2006
Standout moment That first panicky encounter with the Berserker.

2005 F.E.A.R
November 2005
Standout moment The first time you meet the spooky little girl.

2004 HALO 2
November 2004
Standout moment Coasting into Metropolis inside the Scorpion tank.

2003 MEDAL OF HONOUR: RISING SUN
November 2003
Standout moment The game's opening attack on Pearl Harbor.

2002 SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
October 2002
Standout moment Launching Mario into the air with a blast of the FLUDD.

2001 GRAND THEFT AUTO III
October 2001
Standout moment Getting the attention of the military.

2000 SHENMUE
November 2000
Standout moment Christmas Day, of course.

1999 DONKEY KONG 64
November 1999
Standout moment Discovering *Jetpac*.

1998 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME
December 1998
Standout moment Stepping out into expansive Hyrule Field for the first time.

1997 FINAL FANTASY VII
November 1997
Standout moment The death of Aeris.

1996 TOMB RAIDER
November 1996
Standout moment The first sighting of the T-Rex.

1995 TEKKEN
November 1995
Standout moment Working your way through each of its endings.

The history of…

Christmas games

Best Christmas Ever!

RETRO GAMER READERS SHARE SOME OF THEIR FAVOURITE CHRISTMAS MEMORIES WITH US. OF COURSE, THEY'RE ALL RELATED TO VIDEOGAMES. NOT ONE MENTIONS HOW NICE IT WAS TO SIT AROUND THE TABLE TOGETHER AS A FAMILY, POP A FEW CRACKERS, LAUGH AT THE UNFUNNY JOKES INSIDE THEM AND FINISH UP BY WATCHING THE QUEEN'S SPEECH WITH A TEAR IN THEIR EYES… SHAME ON THEM











Smila

Christmas 1987, I remember me and a mate sitting playing *Wizball* on two player. It was bloomin' freezing so I used my Commodore 64 power pack as a foot warmer.

fgasking

My favourite moment has to be Christmas 1988 when I got my first ever games machine – a second-hand Atari 2600 with a big bundle of games. The whole morning was a huge blissful blur playing the likes of *Battlezone*, *Pole Position* and *Missile Command*. My parents didn't have a lot of money at the time – but this meant so much to me and is a very fond childhood memory as a result.

jimbo_too

Christmas 1993 was a special one for me. I came running downstairs wearing my dinosaur pyjamas and dived through the pile of presents until I found one that was the right size, and indeed it was – *Legend Of Zelda: Link's Awakening* for the Game Boy. I must have completed the game more than ten times now, but I still have the (slightly yellow) cartridge and I still dig it out now and then to remind me again just how good it really is.

paranoid marvin

My second favourite Christmas was last year when the *Retro Gamer* team came round and sang carols outside my front door. Well, I think it was the *Retro Gamer* team… there was a bloke with a beard.

bolda

One year I asked for *Frontier: Elite II* for the ST and it arrived a few weeks before Christmas. I did the old 'I'd better check it works before you put it away for Christmas' trick and loaded it up in view of my parents. Once they'd seen it working I switched off the telly and gave them the disk, but left my ST switched on. Fortunately, the game doesn't need the disk once it's loaded so I thought, "Great, I'll just leave my ST switched on." However, my cunning plan was scuppered when I docked at Boston Base in the Barnard's Star system and was greeted by the Federation Police Force. They asked me for a specific word from the instruction manual. Darn you copy protection!

ShadowMan

My best gaming related Christmas was the year that I got my NES. I had the choice to pick out one game and went for *Mega Man 2*. I was so delighted with my new game that I spent all Christmas Day alone in our small study going through and beating each robot master. Quickman's music still haunts me now...

Muteki

Christmas 1992, *Thunder Force IV*. Sweet lord, yes. A game that I'd been gagging to play ever since I'd seen the first screenshots and pant-browning audio-visuals, plus the brick-poohouse challenge meant it was the gift that kept on giving.

I found the 99 lives cheat before Christmas Day was through, but I didn't use it to circumvent the game's difficulty. I have a soul. To this day it remains my favourite game of all time. Thanks mum and dad!

fredghostmaster

Christmas 1978 – I got a Pong TV games machine. At seven years old I thought it was the greatest present in history. And it was… well, until 1981 when I got an Atari VCS with *Space Invaders* and *Asteroids*. These days I get socks instead – not quite the same impact!

Lentini2001

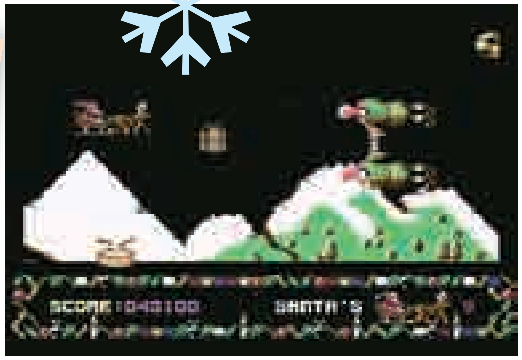
My best Christmas has to be the release of the Mega Drive in the UK and getting one for Chrimble packed with *Revenge Of Shinobi* and *Hellfire*. (Japanese import – but I used to take the screws out of the carts and just plug the ROM in instead.)

JetSetWilly

1990 when I got the Mega Drive, complete with *Sonic* and *Mega Games*. The only games I played (apart from *World Cup '90*… what the hell was that about?). Then my dad produced another present from behind his armchair… *Sonic 2*!



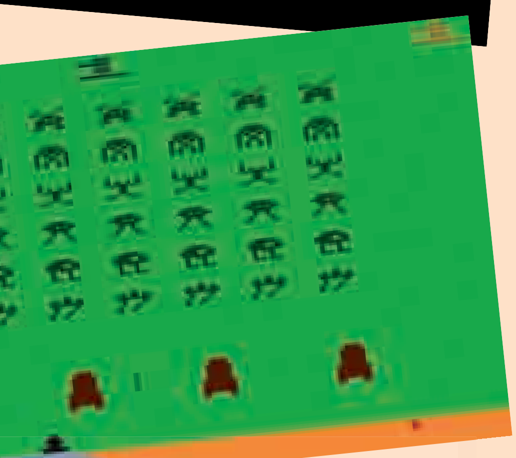




These bosses never move. They remain in that section of the screen until you blow them up with Christmas puddings and crackers.









THE ENDORSED-SOUNDING OFFICIAL FATHER CHRISTMAS GAME, SAW PROCEEDS FROM THE GAME GOING TO THE SAVE THE CHILDREN FUND

annoyingly intelligent, stair-climbing *Donkey Kong* flames. When you reach the bottom rung of the ladder the game flits into a strange isometric 'avoid-'em-up'. Here you must negotiate the rooms inside the house and plant your gifts under a tree while being careful not to run into the blue, sleepwalking clay monsters that patrol the rooms.

Now if you think that game sounds bad, you obviously haven't experienced the appropriately titled: *Santa's Grotty Christmas*, which takes that very first stage of *Special Delivery: Santa Christmas Chaos*, makes it less enjoyable and then stretches it over an entire game. Reprising the role of Santa, sleigh and reindeer, your mission is to deposit gift-rammed stockings down chimneys. Strangely, the peculiar look of the game makes the action look like it's set indoors. The brick houses look like brick fireplaces and the cyan background, decorated with perfectly formed and symmetrically positioned white snowballs, looks like a strange animated Eighties wallpaper. The aim is to drop as many stockings down as many chimneys as possible before the time runs out. And as 'time' is a pretty uninspired and well-used referee in games, *Grotty Christmas* conceals its staleness by calling it 'dust'.

The endorsed-sounding *The Official Father Christmas* game, aka '*Santa Loves Poor People So Much He's Now Opting To Sponsor Them*', saw proceeds from the game going to the Save The Children fund – so we guess we must be careful what we say here. The box art is so dreary that if it was inadvertently mass produced on to Christmas cards, 25 December 1989 could have turned into an ugly re-creation of *Halloween III: Season Of The Witch*, with kids all across the globe opening up their post and getting a peculiar bout of aggression. The artists responsible used that horrific tubular Bauhaus font, which should *only* ever be used in circus promotion, for the game's title on the box art, which also has a photograph of a random guy dressed in a Father Christmas costume bent over a fireplace. Strangely, at first glance it almost looks like he's got his hand stuck up the chimney and is happy about the fact. If the truth be known, from the box, it would be easy to assume that Santa is placing a surveillance camera in the flue system and the game is going to be a festive precursor to *Night Trap*. Sadly, it's not.

The story is a corker, though: despite having 364 days to prepare, come Christmas Eve, Santa is caught with his trousers down. He suddenly remembers that the new flat-pack sleigh he purchased still needs constructing. However, rather than keep all the parts safely inside the box, Santa decided to take them out and put them in random areas of his house. As a result, before you can embark on the night's mission, you have to help the doddering idiot look for them. More puzzlement ensues when, after collecting one of the sleigh pieces, Santa must then try to avoid coming into contact with his bullying elves who attempt to steal the parts from him and replant them in annoying areas to be reclaimed. The next section finds you writing your own virtual Christmas wish list based on a set

The Oli and the Ivy

Generally, you only get one chance to make a first impression, but magazines get 12. The importance of what game you select to spearhead your forthcoming issue is as important a sales influencer as the actual content of the magazine itself. After all, if you write a career-defining 20 page review on *Joe & Mac: Caveman Ninja*, but the magazine cover shows a watercolour painting of a Volvo gearbox, no one's going to bother to pick up the magazine and give it a gander. Sarah, our designer, will generally mock up four possible options each issue before a final decision is reached, and even then its elements get chopped and changed before deadline. The most important cover in the entire year happens in December, the issue you currently hold in your hands. Oliver Frey was instrumental in creating some of the most iconic and revered Christmas cover arts for some of the most well-loved games magazines. *Zzap!64* issue 9 featured a cosy picture of Rockford from *Boulder Dash* looking rather dapper in a bow tie as he played on his Commodore and allowed his roast dinner to get cold (we've all been there). He also created the *Amtix!* issue 1 Christmas Special, which shows the *Amtix!* team getting so engrossed in a strange four-player game on the Amstrad that they fail to notice a toothless zombie smashing through their window to sprinkle glass over their Christmas pudding.

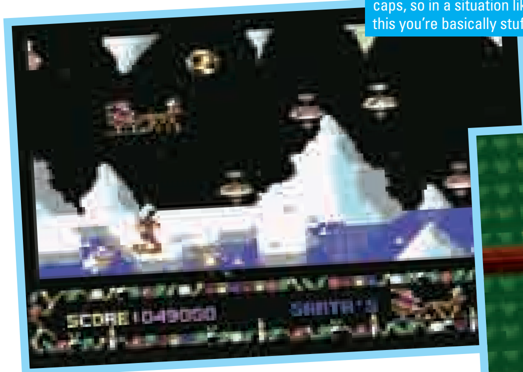


Some examples of Oliver Frey's iconic cover artwork.

The history of... Christmas games

of predetermined present options. These items then proceed to fall from the ceiling of Santa's house where he must pick out the necessary toys via the power of catch. The final stage sees the return of the side-scrolling present dropper, but this time you get to travel around the globe delivering presents to homeowners considerate enough to position a giant floating arrow over their roofs. Hindering your plight, however, are tea-leafing birds and solid fluffy clouds that will whisk your gifts away and (we can only assume) rain them all over the city. To its credit, the game seems to do a reasonable job of covering most of the bullet points on the jolly one's job description, so it's probably the closest you'll ever come to owning a Santa simulator.

The mantle for worst Xmas game, however, has to go to the dire *Parodius*-style Santa shooter, *Santa's Xmas Caper*. This game's gameplay is akin to downing a litre of pungent, stale eggnog and wiping your lips with razor blades. Well, actually, it's worse. It's a three-stage, looping, side-scrolling shooter. In it you must navigate annoyingly tight gaps and battle a frustrating array of skittish decorations, toys and turkeys while blasting them into next Christmas with crackers, festive reefs and puddings. Why we want to draw particular attention to this frustrating little game though, is because of its three amazing bosses. They all take the form of a grossly stretched bitmap, tilted 90 degrees and then copied and pasted next to each other so it looks like they're holding hands. Two of them: the cloned Christmas trees and twin snowmen, actually speak logic, but the first one, which we guess you could argue sort of resembles a Siamese-twin carol singer, is simply bewildering.



You can't touch the ice caps, so in a situation like this you're basically stuffed.



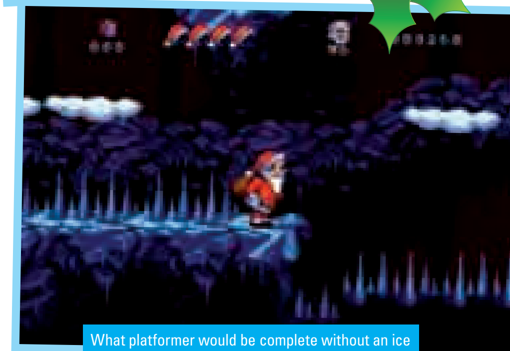
Santa had finally had enough of wrapping presents.

Why it's wise to cover up over winter

Okay, so we've established that games about Christmas tend to be, a) not be very good, b) tend to involve collecting pre-wrapped presents falling from the sky, c) must always have a section dedicated to the delivery process and d) are as enjoyable as taping wasps to your face. But this isn't to say that all Christmas-themed games are monstrous. Thanks in large part to games' magazines, the wonderful Christmas covermount finally demonstrated how the season of goodwill could be fused into a videogame for the power of good.

During the height of videogame magazine popularity it was common to find cassette tapes cellotaped on their shimmering covers. Over the Christmas period publishers used their December issues to treat its readers to Christmas-themed cover games, and many were cracking little gems. In 1987, *Your Sinclair* followed up its fantastic Bally cover tape by bundling its December issue with Gremlin's festive take on *Monty Mole*. Entitled *Moley Christmas*, it kept the series' comedic aspects by using humorous characters, a puny title and a satirical plot line, which saw Monty travelling from Gremlin HQ, to a production plant and then eventually to the *Your Sinclair* office to develop, manufacture and deliver the game that you were playing. The magazine even went as far as to include some nifty cut-out cover art inside the magazine to wrap around the cassette.

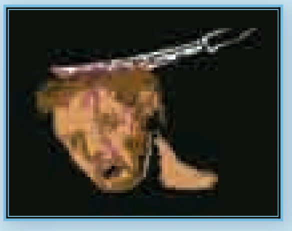
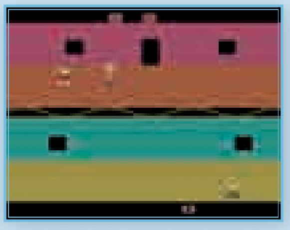
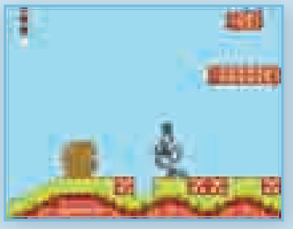
MOLEY CHRISTMAS KEPT THE SERIES' COMEDIC ASPECTS BY USING HUMOROUS CHARACTERS

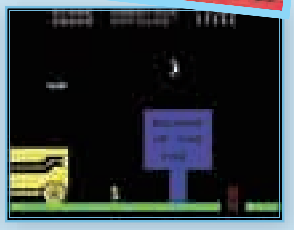


What platformer would be complete without an ice level, especially a Christmas platform game?



"Ho, ho, ho, could you call an ambulance, I've just ripped my arm off!"



Tenuous Seasonal Offerings

WE COMPLETELY EXHAUSTED BOXOUT IDEAS ASSOCIATED WITH CRIMBO, SO HERE ARE SOME GAMES THAT ARE VERY LOOSELY BASED AROUND SPECIAL OCCASIONS, VERY LOOSELY…

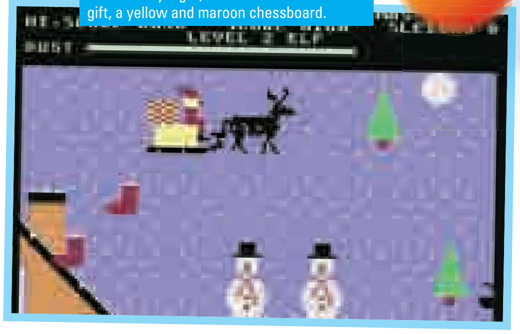
FRIDAY THE 13TH
Darran hates this game. However, Stuart considers it to be an ingenious version of wink, wink you're dead. Seriously, Domark should've packed this game with a mental health warning, because when the gameplay is shattered with a rendition of nails against a blackboard and a screenshot of a messy, mangled pixilated face from one of Clive Barker's dreams, our heart bursts into tears every time.

HALLOWEEN
Wizard's retelling of the Carpenter classic finds you playing Laurie Strode as you help stop her Halloween-mask-wearing brother from putting an end to her new babysitting business. Set inside a wacky colourful house you must lead the petrified children to safety while avoiding the relentless killing machine that is Michael Myers, and trying to stop him from lopping Laurie's head off with a kitchen knife.

BUGS BUNNY BIRTHDAY BLOWOUT
To commemorate Bugs Bunny's 50th birthday, his pals decide to throw him a party. The problem is, before you can enjoy the free bar you have to get him there. This shouldn't be a problem, but his animated buddies have decided to hire out a function hall that's an utter pig to find. This 2D platformer is an enjoyable romp and, despite its lame plot, it's by no means a complete blowout.

BIBLE ADVENTURES
You get three games here, and each plays out like the World's Strongest Man. The first, Noah's Ark, has Noah collecting animal pairs by lifting them over his head and carrying them to safety. The second, Save Baby Moses, involves lifting and throwing baby Moses in a *Super Mario Bros 2* fashion to save him from capture. The final one, David And Goliath, finds you lifting and rounding up sheep and battling old one-eye.

CHUCKIE EGG II
If you've ever wondered how a Kinder Egg is made, *Chuckie Egg II* appears to offer a good account of a day's labour at the Ferrero factory. The sequel to Nigel Alderton's egg-cellent platforming classic finds the series take on an Easter theme. Protagonist Harry has to seek out various ingredients to construct a toy-housing chocolate egg and present the fruits of his folly to the Goods Outwards department.



After a busy night, Santa was left with one gift, a yellow and maroon chessboard.



I know Santa hasn't really got time to stop for toilet breaks, but is that totally necessary?

Readers of *Commodore Disk User* were treated to a great little game called *Snowball Sunday*. It's a perfect example of taking a small aspect associated with Christmas and adapting it into a simple but extremely playable game. Playing the role of William Warmstart, the game has you ducking to the ground, grabbing a handful of slush and launching a soft sludgy projectile at his two friends. *Snowball Sunday* is basically a never-ending snowball fight, void of your mum nagging you to come in for your tea and March coming along and melting everything. Spookily though, the game actually looks not too dissimilar to a reoccurring dream where Captain Scarlet, Captain Blue and Captain Grey were competing in the National Snowball Cup, Grey was three points up in the final quarter and an articulate snowman was tentatively keeping score.

The marriage of Christmas and Commodore would continue right on through into the Amiga era. Team 17 would team up with *Amiga Format* by releasing a special edition two-player Christmas demo of the excellent *ATR: All Terrain Racing*. This wonderful sort of follow-up to its racing classic *Overdrive* was a great little game that played out like a cross between *Micro Machines* and *Super Skidmarks*. Your little hydro buggy would chug round the puffy snow-covered tracks at quite a pace, and, if you were quick enough, you could even spot Father Christmas's slightly peculiar cameo, as a comatose body on the roof of a house.

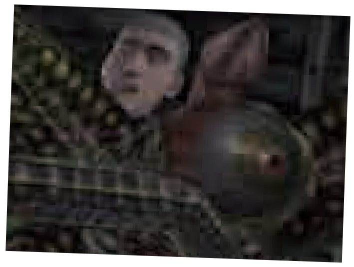
In 1993 two videogame classics received a special festive mashup. Pressed on a transparent diskette and



Ho, ho, let's go!

Anyone fancy a humbug?

WE TAKE A LOOK AT SOME TITLES THAT REALLY DIDN'T TRY VERY HARD TO GET INTO THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT



D2
This survival-horror version of *Lost* begins on Christmas Day in the year 2000. After a freak meteorite interrupts a terrorist plot to bring down a passenger aeroplane, the iron bird crash lands in a Canadian forest. Your protagonist, Laura, awakens from the wreck to find that the survivors are slowly turning insane and the surrounding forest is housing a band of hideous nastiness. The game's risqué plot – sometimes implying sexually violent connotations – caused Sega to alter a peculiar cut-scene involving a multi-phallic monster attacking one of its characters.



CHRISTMAS CARNAGE
This tongue-in-cheek first-person shooter from Germany is the only videogame to have ever asked you to stick a bullet into Santa Claus. You play the role of a green-eyed Easter bunny with some serious anger management issues. After a popularity poll reveals that Santa and Christmas is soaring ahead of the Easter bunny and Easter, the bunny boiler turns up the heat and sets off on a mission to dethrone the king of Christmas by battling through his army of elves and cracking them open, one by one, with a hatchet.



BLUE STINGER
Oddly, another survival-horror game on the Dreamcast that kicks things off with a meteorite. This time, however, the setting is the exuberant-sounding Dinosaur Land (which I'm sure I recall visiting when I went to Disney World a couple of years back). Well, anyway, this game's festiveness comes from its level design, which is swathed in peculiar Father Christmas billboards and glitzy fairy lights. This festive decoration harshly contrasts against the vast number of mutant freaks that your hero must battle in the game's world.



SHADOW OF MEMORIES
This underrated Konami game was an early, innovative take on the survival-horror genre in that it doesn't actually have any real horror in it, per se. The monster of the piece is simply your foreseeable death. The plot and premise is way too complicated to try to shoehorn into this boxout, but if you imagine an episode of *Quantum Leap* dressed in lederhosen you're about halfway there. There's a wonderfully haunting section of the game that's set against an enchantingly snowy backdrop, and, for that reason alone, it finds itself onto this list.



PARASITE EVE
Based around the world of novelist Hideaki Sena, this survival-horror-cum-role-playing game offset its nightmares in two ways. First, the story begins on Christmas Eve, and second, the drama unfolds while our protagonist, Aye Brea, is on a date. During a night at the opera everyone in the theatre, bar three people – Aye, an actress, and her potential husband – spontaneously combust in their seats. And, as if that's not going to put a dampener on the evening, her date changes into a grotesque flying mutant.

SNOWBALL SUNDAY IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF TAKING A SMALL ASPECT OF CHRISTMAS AND ADAPTING IT INTO A PLAYABLE GAME

The history of...

Christmas games

again splashed over the face of *Amiga Format*, *Cannon Soccer* was a festive two-level portmanteau of Sensible Software's *Sensible Soccer* and *Cannon Fodder*, and saw itsy bitsy soldiers battling it out to turn scores of footballers into sloppy messes. But perhaps the most popular festive revival came when DMA's classic animal-rights simulator *Lemmings* was dressed up in festive attire. This special edition of the game saw the suicidal ones sporting Father Christmas costumes and bauble hats on top of their scruffy green mops. This standalone *Lemmings* adventure was so successful that it spawned its very own sequel, *Christmas Lemmings 1994*. It amalgamated the original's 16 levels, added 16 more and shifted units by the truckload. Not bad when you consider that the concept originally began life as a freebie four-level demo disc.

The popularity of console gaming brought about a new software platform that made it unfeasible to continue with magazine covermounts. Cartridges were expensive, bulky and heavy, but the Christmas game would still find ways of breaking into the mainstream. Perhaps the most unflinching game of its type came in the form of the now reasonably rare Mega Drive platform game, *Daze Before Christmas*. Playing the role of Santa, it was your mission to liberate his elves from the maniacal and probably soggy grip of an evil snowman. Using Santa's magic powers, you turned the evil toys, rats and snowy henchmen into nicely wrapped gifts. The most inspiring thing about this game is the introduction of a *Gremlins*-style rule to the mythology of Santa Claus. Yes, for the same reason you never pick a water fight with a mogwai, you don't – under any circumstances, no matter how tired he might look, no matter how long that night of present delivery might seem – allow Santa to drink a mug of coffee. Failure to abide by this simple rule will result in him turning into a crazy-looking luchadore called Anti-Claus. Of course, the game wouldn't be a 'proper Santa Claus game' without having some kind of lame sleigh-travelling, present-dropping section in it, and, thankfully, *Daze Before Christmas* didn't disappoint.

Other games wouldn't go as mad as *Daze*, many would instead opt to subtly feature festive imagery inside their levels. Sega's Mega Drive smash *World Of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse And Donald Duck*, for instance, had a secret Christmas level that could only be obtained during a co-op game. After our squabbling heroes jumped into a giant Christmas present they were whisked to a section that found them leaping from baubles and hanging from lush Christmas trees.

Millenium Interactive's *James Pond* series also fused Christmas elements into its spy action by including snowmen foes, polar bears and a Christmas-themed stage. For the sequel it would go one better by giving the entire game a Christmas theme. Set around Santa's toy factory, the game saw Pond put a stop to the nefarious Dr Maybe who had pilfered all the toys and also kidnapped a few poor penguins for good measure.

CHRISTMAS NIGHTS WAS A CLEVER BUNTING VERSION OF THE SONIC TEAM CLASSIC

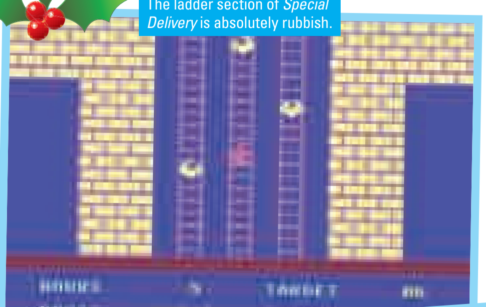
Banjo-Kazooie on the Nintendo 64 also featured a level called Freezeezy Peak, which had an enormous snowman-shaped mountain. The stage involved eking out hidden presents and a puzzle that asked you to power the lights on a Christmas tree. On top of the festive visuals Rare also treated our ears to a fantastic composition that really helped to further supplant Christmas into your head.

The advent of compact-disc gaming saw a return to a format that was cheap and conveniently flat; the perfect tool to relaunch demo discs on to the cover of magazines. And the 32-bit era would bring about the greatest Christmas covermount ever pressed. *Christmas NiGHTS* was a clever bunting version of the Sonic Team classic, which Sega hoped would draw in a new crowd to the game's visceral delights. Offering two levels from the original game, but decorated with fairy lights, Christmas trees and caked in snow, the game boasted a rotund Robotnick-bauble boss to play a metaphorical fairy aloft this striking tree. The disc also came packed

RG the Game – coming soon on N-Gage, only kiddin'



It's been Darran and Stuart's dying wish to one day feature in their very own videogame. If given the choice, Stu would like to appear in an unsucky version of *Dead Rising* where he *could* actually use everything he finds in the mall, and the entire game would be about feeding zombies the heads of those stupid jerk-face victims who are so utterly, utterly moronic. Darran's dream, however, is slightly more achievable: a game in the guise of *Monty Mole*. In fact, his dream is so achievable that the clever bods at Auld Games have gone all Noel Edmunds and granted him his Xmas wish. The story goes that Sam Stoat has scarpered with the Christmas issue of **Retro Gamer**, which you, an employee under Darran's iron rule, must retrieve before you're left jobless. The sneaky stoat has seen fit to scatter the pages of the magazine in hard-to-reach places and as Monty (which we're going to say is Stuart, because of probable legal wrangling involving the use of Alex Kidd) you must collect them before you're booted off the top floor of **Retro Gamer** Towers.



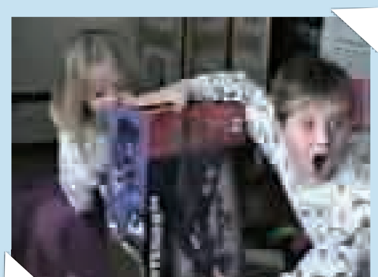
The ladder section of *Special Delivery* is absolutely rubbish.



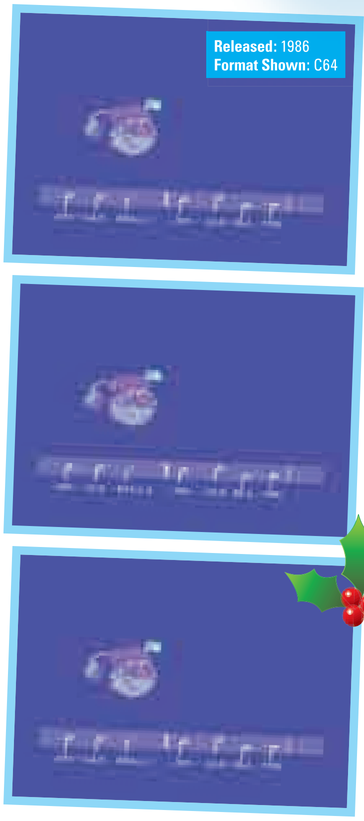
Watch out for the blue sleepwalking freaks, they hate Santa.

OMG Nintendo Sixty FOUUUURRRRRR Kid – the Walkthrough

The N64 kid video on YouTube demonstrates a real need for parents to keep ear plugs and a paper bag nearby when springing a brand new console on an unsuspecting child on Christmas morning. Here's a walkthrough of the complete video for those who don't have access to the internet. (If you're keen to check out the video for yourself, and don't want us to tell you what happens, then we recommend you stop reading this boxout now.) The N64 kid rips open the wrapping to find a glistening new Nintendo 64 inside, "OMG, OMG!" he screams. He turns his bulging eyes towards his parents and flips over the box several times before the power of owning 64 bits and a cardboard box finally jolts his head backwards in a peculiar Eighties videogame commercial manner. N64 kid then screams at the box for a few seconds before scratching at it as if it were buried in the sand. After more screaming and more "OMGs", the awesomeness of finally getting to play *Mario64* dawns on N64 kid and he throws his fist into the air. He then opens his next gift, which is a remote-control car, and pretends to be kind of impressed, but fails miserably.







Released: 1986
Format Shown: C64

Pop a load of this

We don't think you can really consider *A Popples Christmas Adventure* a game, per se, as it's more akin to an interactive Christmas card. This ruling is enforced by the fact that the game was spun by card company American Greetings. In case you're wondering, the Popples are a race of Care Bears imposters that have pompoms for tails. Their first foray into the world of computer entertainment begins with a 30-second karaoke rendition of *Jingle Bells*, and a section that allows you to move a minuscule cross around a map drawn with an Etch A Sketch. As we said, you can't really justify calling this a computer game.



"Hey, if Andy Peters is reading this, why don't you return my Facebook request! Quack, quack!"

with a new festive soundtrack and a neat little interactive advent calendar to countdown the days until Christmas Day.

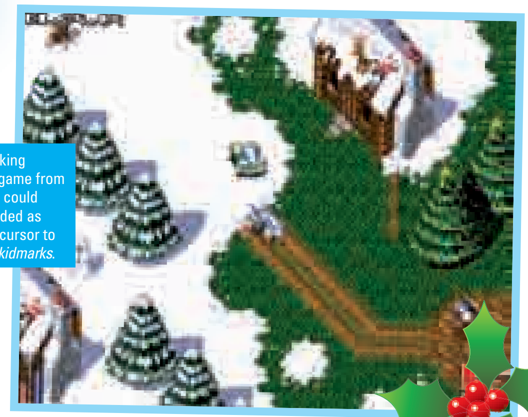
NiGHTS creator Yuji Naka reveals that the creation of *Christmas NiGHTS* had two purposes, and admits where it was he found inspiration for the idea.

"The first purpose was to create a wonderful game and let as many people as possible know about it," he says. "It was also a Christmas present for the fans from us. To tell the truth, I am a fan of the game *Lemmings*, and at the time I was developing *Sonic 2* I was in the United States. One day, when I went to the store, I found a product called *Christmas Lemmings*. It felt like a Christmas present from the creator of *Lemmings* and I wanted the fans to feel that same happiness through the game I created."

Sega would take its gushing love for Christmas to new heights through the internal clock mechanisms that lived inside the Saturn and Dreamcast. These components would allow developers to incorporate festive presents into their games that could only be unlocked at certain dates. Midway utilised this function by incorporating decorative ringsides, festive costumes and even a snowman pugilist into its *Ready 2 Rumble* series. Sega would even make use of the Dreamcast's Dreamarena, by allowing the six people that signed up to the service the opportunity to download and save exclusive Christmas content for the Station Square level in *Sonic Adventure*.

Yule Suzuki

Well, we've asked many of you to tell us of your best ever gaming Christmas, and we'd like to end this feature on ours.



This striking looking game from Team 17 could be heralded as the pre-cursor to *Super Skidmarks*.

There are so many iconic moments in *Shenmue* that we could lovingly rant about them for this entire issue, but the one part of its whole memorable narrative that continually sticks out for us was the day the game's clock reached 25 December 1986. Not a great deal happens on Christmas Day in *Shenmue*, there's more upbeat conversing with its wonderfully quirky populace, sections of the beautiful Yuzo Koshiro score smattered with jingle bells and the streets of Duboita are beautifully adorned with colourful decorations and garland banners. But for the most part, Christmas represents a break from the fighting, a breather from the chasing and, vitally, from the story, and that's exactly what made it so memorable. Before that day finally arrives, you have an inkling that AM2 has prepared something special. The magic weather function turns the air white and crisp and the town delicately prepares for the day's arrival with decorations and high spirits. It's probably the closest you'll ever come to experiencing a virtual Christmas (and yes, that includes the *Sims 2* expansion pack). And it's entirely down to the brilliant vision of Yu Suzuki and the skill of his team who capture the atmosphere perfectly.

So what lies ahead for the future of Christmas and videogames? For the reasons that we've looked at, it'll be unlikely that we'll see a glut of Santa games appearing any time soon. But perhaps through services like Xbox Live and Virtual Console we might see something make a re-emergence.

Well, we've reached the end of this peculiar retrospective look at Christmas games. We hope it's gone some of the way towards getting you all into the Christmas spirit. We'd also like to take this opportunity to thank everyone over on the forum who helped us wrap this feature up. All that's left for us to do is crack open the mulled wine and eggnog, raise a glass and wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy new year. We'll see you all again in 2008. You know that makes the Dreamcast almost nine years old now. We wonder if Darran will let us put a little sprinkling of Dreamcast in the magazine next year?



Despite what the movie's say, Santa's house helps him load up his sack.

Selection Box

WE'VE LOOKED AT A FEW FESTIVE GAMES TO GET STUCK INTO, HERE ARE A FEW MORE TO HELP PUT YOU IN THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT…

Animal Crossing (GameCube)
Batman Returns (SNES)
Christmas Seaman (Dreamcast)
Father Christmas (Saturn)
Gremlins (Multiformat)
Horace Goes Skiing (C64)
Mad Maestro! (PS2)
Parasite Eve (PSone)
Pen Pen Trilcelon (Dreamcast)
A Popples Christmas Adventure (C64)
Santa Claus (BBC)
Santa Claus In Trouble (PC)
Santa Claus Junior (GBA)
Santa Claus Saves The Earth (PSone)
Secret Of Mana (SNES)
Serious Sam (Xbox)
ToeJam & Earl III (Xbox)
Battletoads (Arcade)
James Pond 2: Codename Robocod (Multiformat)

THE MAKING OF…

THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

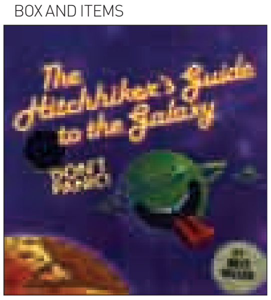
On an insignificant planet orbiting a small yellow sun descended life forms so primitive they thought digital watches a neat idea. But some rose above the rest, creating devious text adventures akin to having your brains smashed out by a slice of lemon wrapped round a large gold brick. Craig Grannell talks to Steve Meretzky about adapting Douglas Adams' classic story for Infocom





IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** INFOCOM
» **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
» **RELEASED:** 1984 (ORIGINAL RELEASE)
» **GENRE:** TEXT ADVENTURE/ INTERACTIVE FICTION
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5 FOR REISSUES, £25+ FOR ORIGINAL RELEASE WITH BOX AND ITEMS



It began with a radio comedy, and then it became a book, a towel, a TV series, an argument (regarding how to spell its title), and, in the early Eighties, interactive fiction. We are, of course, talking about *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* ('*Hitchhiker*'s' from here), Douglas Adams' seminal story about the luckless Arthur Dent, whose world isn't so much turned upside down as obliterated one morning when he wakes to find his house about to be demolished, that one of his friends is an alien researcher for an intergalactic encyclopaedia (and not an unemployed actor from Guildford, as he claimed), and a race of alien bureaucrats are about to demolish the Earth.

Humorous, irreverent, engaging and tremendous fun, *Hitchhiker's* would prove a challenge to adapt for home computers. The challenge fell to Steve Meretzky, who worked in tandem with Douglas, turning his unique story into a game for Infocom, then undisputed kings of the text adventure. "I have a degree in construction project management, and that was the ideal background for getting into games design, because it convinced me that I wanted to actually do something that involved at least a slight bit of amusement and job satisfaction," says Steve. After sharing an apartment with Mike Dornbrook, Infocom's first tester, Steve took over the role when Mike departed for business school. "I liked the literate nature of Infocom's games, and on top of that, the puzzles added an amazingly





» A witty take on escalating bureaucracy, the game's box had demolition orders for Arthur's house (in English) and the Earth (in Vogon).



» *Hitchhiker's* refuses to go away – check the BBC's BAFTA-winning remake at www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/hitchhikers/game.shtml.



» The online BBC version lets you watch as the action unfolds, with Arthur's house about to be demolished here.

compelling aspect to the play," explains Steve. "All adventure game players have experienced that middle-of-the-day epiphany – 'Of course! I need to wear the Cloak of Doom and release the ferrets before I use the frob on the foozle!' – and can't wait to rush home to try it."

With *Hitchhiker's*, it was Douglas who made the first move. When the prospect of a game arose, during talks with his publisher and agent, Douglas was insistent Infocom develop it. "He was an Infocom fan, and saw its games as a step above the level of others being produced at the time," recalls Steve, who also believes that Marc Blank (who worked on *Zork* and *Deadline*) was Douglas's preferred partner in crime. "But Marc was busy, so he asked if I'd be interested, partly because my first game, *Planetfall*, had a similar humour/sci-fi sensibility to *Hitchhiker's*, and partly because I was the only implementer as tall as Douglas, and therefore would be able to see eye to eye with him. I wrestled with the question for two or three milliseconds and said 'yes'."

Upon starting work on the game, it was clear the process wouldn't be the same as past projects. "First, there was the collaborative aspect. Companies were adapting literature for adventure games, with no involvement of the original authors, but we wanted full collaboration," says Steve. "This was because authors know more about their work than us, but we knew more about the development environment and the rules and possibilities of text adventures than an author could pick up in a reasonable time frame." Additionally, the very prospect of adaptation came with its own problems. "We had to create a puzzle-intensive game that a fan of *Hitchhiker's* wouldn't find trivial, and that someone unfamiliar with the story wouldn't find impossible. I think we did a good job changing the story and situations just enough so existing fans found it familiar but didn't know the solutions to all the puzzles," says Steve.

At first, Douglas drove the design, because Steve was intimidated working with someone at Douglas's level of success on his own creation. This is why the beginning of the game is very linear, almost directly following the plot of the book. "Not being a games designer, Douglas was still thinking linearly," says Steve. "As we got more comfortable working together, and I began to assert myself, and Douglas got more familiar with the possibilities of non-linear storytelling, that changed – the majority of the game has the most fiercely non-linear structure of any adventure title I've ever worked on."

An obvious non-linear component involves the innovative idea of regularly switching characters throughout the game, sometimes revisiting a scenario, but as a different person. "That was Douglas's idea, I believe from before I was even involved with the project, and it was great," says Steve. "It created all kinds of comic possibilities, such as seeing Arthur through Trillian's eyes during a party scene. And it created an anything-is-possible sense in the

"WE HAD TO CREATE A PUZZLE-INTENSIVE GAME THAT A FAN OF HITCHHIKER'S WOULDN'T FIND TRIVIAL, AND THAT SOMEONE UNFAMILIAR WITH THE STORY WOULDN'T FIND IMPOSSIBLE"
STEVE MERETZKY ON MAKING HITCHHIKER'S ACCESSIBLE

» Suitably, what with it being a text adventure, *Hitchhiker's* had a wordy advert. It's also proof that beer and gaming mix. Probably.



» Just another day at the Infocom office – after all, creating interactive fiction is a serious business.



TOUGH LOVE

Although some *Hitchhiker's* puzzles are notoriously tricky and obscure, Steve notes Infocom was producing hint books, and so, "it wasn't a huge worry if someone couldn't figure out a particular puzzle." However, with Douglas's property being so popular, some at Infocom considered the game too hard, and had wanted to label its difficulty as 'standard', as opposed to 'intermediate' or 'expert', to attract new Infocom players. "But Douglas was adamant that hard puzzles were a virtue," remembers Steve. "I remember his last visit to Infocom, towards the end of the project. Douglas was leaving for the airport, and I was about to go into a meeting to face the entire QA department, who I knew were going to argue for making the game – and especially the Babel fish puzzle – easier. I asked Douglas, 'What should I tell them?' He thought for a moment and then said matter-of-factly, 'You should tell them to f*ck off!'" In the end, the game's difficulty undoubtedly contributed to its cult status, and, as Steve says, "Would there have been 'I Got the Babel fish' T-shirts sold for an easier game?"

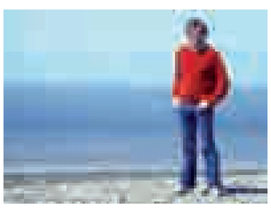
THE MAKING OF…
THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY



» The Megadodo Publications leaflet helpfully adds a splash of colour, at odds with the restrained interface of the game itself. Like the game, it constantly fibs.

END OF THE ROAD

Anyone who's managed to finish *Hitchhiker's* will undoubtedly have stared aghast at the rather abrupt ending, screamed a little, and then wondered whatever happened to the promised sequel. "There was a hiatus after *Hitchhiker's* was finished, because Douglas (below) was tired of working on it in any medium, and wanted to work on something else first, but we didn't want to write the next game without his involvement," recalls Steve. The 'something else' turned out to be *Bureaucracy*, a project that Steve notes, "dragged on and on," finally arriving three years after *Hitchhiker's* release. "Work finally started on the sequel, which was going to be called *Restaurant At The End Of The Universe*, but it was never completed before Activision shut down Infocom in 1989," says Steve. "I didn't do any of the work on it myself, so I don't know much about the design, although I do still have a file of related notes and documents somewhere in my basement."



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

ZORK I (PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: AMIGA, AMSTRAD CPC, APPLE II, ATARI 8-BIT, ATARI ST, C64, IBM PC (DOS), MACINTOSH, TRS-80, AND OTHERS
YEAR: 1980-8

PLANETFALL
SYSTEM: AMIGA, APPLE II, ATARI 8-BIT, ATARI ST, C64, IBM PC (DOS), MACINTOSH, AND OTHERS
YEAR: 1983-8

LEATHER GODDESSES OF PHOBOS
SYSTEM: AMIGA, APPLE II, ATARI 8-BIT, ATARI ST, C64, IBM PC (DOS), MACINTOSH, AND OTHERS
YEAR: 1986-8



player, allowing us to play with time and space in all sorts of fun ways, such as going inside your own mind to remove the particle of common sense." In a time when it was rare to play a specific character, let alone several, this radical move was actually welcomed by Infocom, who'd previously mostly offered players genderless, nameless avatars. "There was a worry players wouldn't be able to identify with a character who was clearly 'not you', especially if that character was a different gender," recalls Steve. "It seems silly now, in a post-Sonic The Hedgehog, post-Lara Croft world, but it seemed a valid concern at the time, and the character-shifting helped mitigate that."

But Douglas and Steve weren't done rallying against convention. Despite having one of the smallest geographical environments of any Infocom game, *Hitchhiker's* nonetheless pushed at the boundaries of the genre, Douglas's uniquely creative assets shining through. "He came up with things I never would have come up with working alone – inventory items like 'no tea' and 'the thing my aunt gave me which I don't know what it is', having a parser failure queue the words that fall through a inputs you hadn't initially anticipated. Given our schedule and the difficulties of communication in that pre-internet world – along with Douglas's high level of busyness – I had to create those myself, sometimes by finding bits of appropriate text in the *Hitchhiker's* canon, but more often just writing something in what I hoped was the same style. At the end of messages and emails, via embryonic online services, enabled the pair to work remotely. "Douglas would send a 'wodge' – his term! – of material, which I'd try to turn into useable stuff," says Steve. "Often, this was just wild brainstorms and little snatches of 'player input/game response' that needed to be shepherded into the

> "THERE WAS A WORRY PLAYERS WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY WITH A CHARACTER WHO WAS CLEARLY 'NOT YOU', ESPECIALLY IF THAT CHARACTER WAS A DIFFERENT GENDER. THE CHARACTER-SHIFTING HELPED MITIGATE THAT" STEVE MERETZKY

wormhole and start an interstellar war, and many more," says Steve. One of the strangest moments for players is arguing with the game to access a location, although Steve notes *Hitchhiker's* wasn't the first game to outright lie to a player. "There's a similar moment in my *Planetfall* game," he says. "Tired of the bland 'You find nothing interesting' responses I was writing, I made the game respond to 'Look under the table' in the dining hall with something like, 'You find crates of food and water and medicine and a hyperspace radio and piles of gold and jewels… Just kidding, there's nothing there.' Of course, Douglas took it to the next level, making the game wait a couple of turns before admitting it was lying!"

Over time, this melding of minds became increasingly important as the pressures of deadlines (about which Douglas once said, "I love deadlines. I like the whooshing sound they make as they fly by") became increasingly apparent. "As the game's development process went on, I did more and more of the writing," says Steve. "Inherent in the process of creating text adventures is creating loads of responses to player the project, Douglas mentioned that he could no longer tell what he had written and what I had written."

Initially, the pair had spent a week working together in Massachusetts, during which time the first portion of the game – the Earth and Vogon ship scenes – were created. But then Douglas returned to the UK, and weekly phone constraints of the game environment." After a few months, and with the game running far behind schedule, the pair reunited in England, in a country inn where Douglas was holed up on the orders of his agent. "He was supposed to be writing *So Long, And Thanks For All The Fish*, which was already something like 11 months late," laughs

» The BBC's online remake of *Hitchhiker's* won a BAFTA for Best Online Entertainment in 2005.





» Poor old Marvin. The Paranoid Android just can't be cheered up.



» A hangover is bad enough, but when you've got two heads? We can't even imagine the suffering.

Steve. "I remember when we got to the end of the game, we had all these loose ends – various pieces of fluff, all the tools you were collecting, the 'tea'/'no tea' items, the whale and the flowerpot, Eddie and the landing on Magrathea – and were trying to figure out how to tie it all up." Stumped, the pair left the inn, went for a drive, and ended up on a beach. "While there, sitting on driftwood and surrounded by sheep, we came up with the final puzzles – using the fluff to create a seed for the flowerpot that produced the fruit that gave you a glimpse of the future that told you what tool to give Marvin that allowed you to get off the ship and explore Magrathea! – and I soon rushed back to the US to get the game into QA-ready state during an insane ten-day marathon," says Steve.

The finished game met with an overwhelmingly positive response and was a major hit for Infocom. Buyers were further rewarded by various 'feelies' – bonus items in the game's box. "Douglas suggested the sunglasses, which you were prompted to put on when it was time to view your score, but the creative agency in charge of developing the package came up with most of the feelies after playing an early version of the game," explains Steve. "As a company philosophy, Infocom attempted to have a lot of fun stuff in the box – this made owning the packaging more desirable, and, therefore, probably cut down on piracy."

Subsequent repackaging was more limited, but the game's appeal shines to this day, with a recent online illustrated version for the BBC website (made to celebrate the game's 20th anniversary) winning a BAFTA. Text adventures as a whole, though, have largely disappeared. As Richard Harris noted in an article originally written for DouglasAdams.com, "Graphics came along and the computer-using portion of the human race forgot all about 500,000 years of language evolution and went straight back to the electronic equivalent of banging rocks together – the point-and-click game […] signalling the arrival of the post-literate society."

According to Steve (who still works in the industry as senior designer at Blue Fang Games), Infocom did its best to stop this inevitable shift, "The company tried hard to keep text adventures going, with new genres (such as romance in *Plundered Hearts*), licensed titles (such as *Shogun*), adding illustrations, and so on. But most of the audience had moved on to newer types of games. I certainly mourn their passing, as they were a huge part of my life for many years."



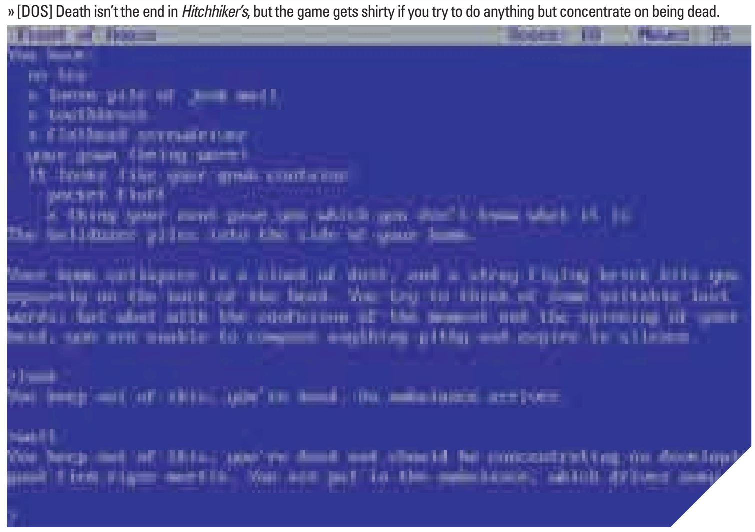
» If everything becomes too much, don the natty Joo Janta 200 Super-Chromatic Peril-Sensitive sunglasses to relax, or vent by unleashing the microscopic space fleet on unsuspecting local microorganisms.

Thanks to Josh Larios (www.elsewhere.org) and Steve Meretzky for supplying imagery for this feature.

» [C64] The start, and the first command to enter. But, with what's about to happen, Arthur Dent would likely rather stay in bed.



» [DOS] Death isn't the end in *Hitchhiker's*, but the game gets shirty if you try to do anything but concentrate on being dead.





RETROINSPECTION

SINCLAIR ZX81



IT'S BEEN SAID THAT THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STUMBLING BLOCKS AND STEPPING STONES IS THE WAY YOU USE THEM. FOR SINCLAIR RESEARCH, THE SHORT-LIVED ZX81 SERVED ITS PURPOSE AS A STEPPING STONE TO THE ZX SPECTRUM SUPERBLY, AND PROVIDED A SOLID PATHWAY INTO THE WONDERFUL NEW WORLD OF HOME COMPUTING FOR A GENERATION OF GAMERS

It was only on the shelves for two years, but the ZX81 made a significant (if dichotomous) impact between 1981 and 1983, inaugurating a huge number of curious technophiles into the previously prohibitive world of home computing. Without this ostensibly minor upgrade to the ZX80, the extraordinarily prolific 8-bit revolution that quickly followed might well have known a significantly smaller congregation.

When discussing historical relevance it feels somehow trite to reduce matters to monetary concerns, but in the case of the ZX range of computers, the price tag genuinely was a momentous achievement for Sinclair Research. Home computing in the late-Seventies and early-Eighties presented a monumental financial investment that was entirely supported by a niche customer base. Computers weren't the necessary, easily justifiable home appliance they are today, so anyone wanting to dabble in the new world of amateur code had to dig deep into threadbare pockets to satisfy their curiosity.

While other manufacturers vindicated their product's astronomical costs with impressive, bullet-pointed lists of powerful processing capabilities, Uncle Clive aimed to astonish with a simple, lightweight price tag, and it was this distinctly British philosophy that put the ZX80 (the first machine to crack the £100 price barrier) into so many homes only a year before the ZX81.

All the astute pioneers in the computing and videogaming world during this embryonic phase knew the importance of affordability. Silicon was electronic gold, and if computer designers wanted to reduce costs they had to lighten the loads on their PCBs. At precisely the same time as Sinclair Research was pouring its talents into ridding excessive hardware, across the Atlantic Nolan Bushnell was offering huge incentives to Atari's designers to reduce chip count in new games. It was exactly this line of minimalist thought that had prompted Steve Wozniak to reinvent *Breakout* and to create the Apple computer. It was no coincidence that those early campaigners made such a massive impact on the future of domestic computing and gaming: they all paid careful consideration to our wallets.

Steve Vickers, designer of the improved ZX81's 8K ROM, vividly remembers just how important this business model was at Sinclair Research, and told us what it was like during those early days around Clive Sinclair's offices.

"It was interesting to see the commercial pressures that drove the products. Launch dates were very important," he begins. "The dates were those of particular exhibitions, and this meant that the deadlines were fixed externally. Hardware design was largely governed by using every possible, and often ingenious, means to reduce chip counts and production costs. Clive himself was exquisitely alert to these issues, and in a sense the nature of the actual product was secondary to him."

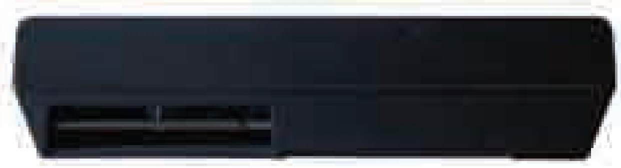
This was the real, hidden strength of the ZX81 over its chip-heavy predecessor, and the reason it was an admittedly underpowered, yet

Processor: Zilog Z80
CPU Speed: 3.5 MHz
RAM: 1K
ROM: 8K
Resolution: 64x48 (24 lines x 32 characters) – also capable of 256x192
Colours: Monochrome
Sound: None
Retail Price: £69.95 ready built (£49.95 in kit form).
Release Date: 1981
Why the ZX81 was great: It was cheap as chips; a physical checklist of fixed problems and subtle tweaks to the ZX80, with 30 quid shaved off the price. "Why not buy a ZX81?" was the motto of bedroom programmers everywhere.

INSTANT EXPERT

Less than a tenth of the cost of the Apple II on its launch, the ZX81 was (proportionally) the most affordable home computer ever produced.
The ZX81 used a proprietary form of BASIC, so costs were reduced as no licence fee went to Microsoft.
Programs and games could be saved and loaded through a standard cassette tape recorder – something the ZX80 was unable to do.
A unique, 'spark' (*not* thermal) printer was available that used black, aluminised paper to zap the text on to. Just like the computer, this was cheap and cheerful.
By cleverly confusing the ZX81, programmers have devised ways to 'trick' the system into providing a high-resolution display of up to 256x192 – even though Clive Sinclair had initially said that it was impossible.
Solder-happy punters could save themselves 20 quid by purchasing the ZX81 in kit form and assembling it themselves.
Third-party developers released additional add-ons, including memory packs up to 63K, and graphics and sound modules.
Although not really reflected by the profits Sinclair Research recorded, the ZX81 sold around 1,000,000 units worldwide (they didn't all work, unfortunately).
A chess program was written that ran comfortably within the limited 1K of RAM – one of the smallest examples of a chess program ever seen.
The ZX81 could multiplex between the display and running a program – solving the ZX80's problem with a flickering screen.

SINCLAIR ZX81



» The thin PCB was all there was to hold the peripherals in place – no wonder the RAM pack enjoyed such a free lifestyle.



» The ZX81 in its cheaper, slightly less cheerful (unless you're into soldering) form.



» Although the ZX80 had its charms, the black ABS casing of the ZX81 was a big hit among design conscious technophiles of the day.

highly accessible computing warhorse. While the ZX80 housed over 20 different ICs under its thin plastic skin, the ZX81's brainpan was emptied of all but four vital chips; one of which was a custom IC compiling the majority of the ancillary functions into one slab of silicon. Of those four digital workhorses, the ROM was perhaps the only one which remained almost completely unaltered, though its development continued with a doubling of capacity up to a whopping 8K. As the man behind the re-engineering of the ZX81's nervous system, Steve explains not only the advancements of the ROM, but its intricate similarities to its parent's.

"John Grant's 4K BASIC for the ZX80 was a miracle of compaction," he says. "As far as possible I left its design and code intact and added the new ZX81 features to it in a modular way. I started by learning the Z80 assembler, which I'd never used before. The first task was adding a floating point maths package, which was big but fairly self-contained. I had to do some research into the Chebyshev polynomials I used for calculating functions, and devised a stack-based internal language to describe the algorithms. This was both compact and easy to program compared with raw assembler code. That was when I had to begin to understand the old system better in order to see how it needed modifying to integrate it with the old ZX80 system."

While Steve might speak a language better understood by an EPROM burner, it's easy to decipher that Sinclair Research had found precisely the right man to increase the capabilities of this new system. Indeed, Steve rather astutely approached the augmentation of the ZX franchise precisely as Clive intended to sell it – by way of upgrade and home industry.

It's fair to say the ZX81 was an upgrade, rather than a successor. This isn't the criticism it appears to be, however, since that was precisely the design brief Sinclair Research had drawn up. After all, it'd go completely against the economic nature of the ZX range to ask people to replace a 12-month-old computer. Steve told us about the ZX81's ROM design process that was carried over into the market place.

"One design remit was that the ZX81 ROM should also work as an upgrade in the ZX80 hardware. In essence the brief was to make a cheaper ZX80 with display *and* computing capabilities and floating point maths. Other additions included more versatile graphics for printing and plotting at specified places on screen, multi-dimensional and string arrays, substring operations, software to drive the Sinclair printer, miscellaneous enhancements to the BASIC and anything else useful that would go in the extra 4K of ROM," says Steve.

Sinclair's already happy punters could buy the massive new 8K ROM along with the slightly altered replacement keyboard membrane. While it didn't solve all the shortcomings of Sinclair's first ZX computer, the upgrade option was well received, and worked particularly well, since the ZX81 had been deliberately designed to operate this way.

"To test the code I'd blow it into EPROMS and plug it into the hardware. Eventually we used the ZX81 hardware as it reached a working level of its development, but initially we used a ZX80 to test the new ROM out," Steve explains.

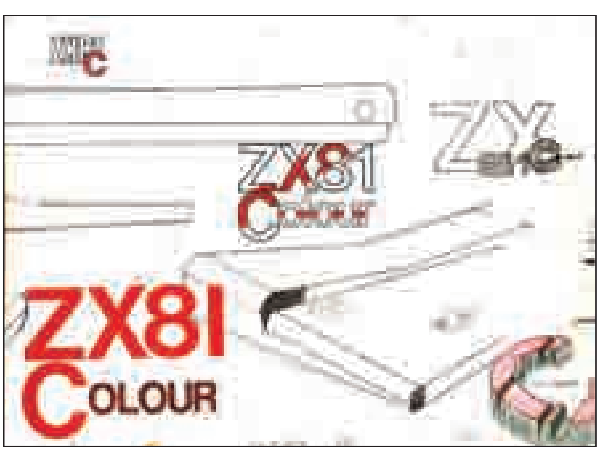
Unfortunately, this upgrade didn't solve the ZX80's issue with simultaneous computing and displaying. Or lack of it, to be more precise – causing a screen flicker every time the laboured processor took an input or ran a program. The ZX81 managed a suitable work around of the problem by allowing programs to run during the frame return period when the display (being your old Bakelite telly) was refreshing, and also during the blank top and bottom 'borders' phase of the display driver. While this essentially didn't fix the problem, it did prove to be an ingenious method of multiplexing the industrious Z80 processor and giving users the illusion of simultaneous display and computing without the seizure-inducing screen blanking that made its predecessor so 'special'.

"AS THE US VIDEOGAME MARKET DISAPPEARED UP ITS OWN… CARTRIDGE SLOT, BRITISH CODERS SIMPLY CHOSE THEIR NEW WEAPON OF CHOICE: SPECTRUM, COMMODORE OR AMSTRAD"

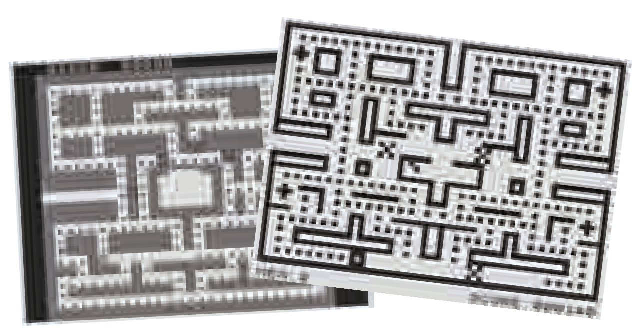
Naturally, this resource sharing slowed the processor quite considerably, despite making the monochromatic screen look a lot better during use. The ZX81 was a limited system even by 1981's standards, so gaming was never really an intended function and full programmer access took greater priority than entertaining casual users. Therefore, it was reasonably concluded that hackers should have a choice as to pretty displays and full processing power, so the ZX81 incorporated two methods of operation – esoterically named FAST and SLOW.

FAST put the Z80 processor to use in the same method as the ZX80 – blanking the display so it could dedicate itself to calculating, while SLOW multiplexed the required operations between video and software. While it eased the eye strain of regular coders, this wasn't a particularly significant modification to the ZX lineage, though the inherent reason for including this option *was* significant. Few computers have been made that allowed such unrestricted access to every single function as the ZX81, and inspired programmers soon found alternative use for many of the machine's processes.

The ZX81 had no audio capabilities, though it's unwise to add a full stop after that 'fact'. Early in its life, some surgical code boffin realised that by switching rapidly between FAST and SLOW modes, tones could be induced into the television signal creating a basic



» Before it became the Spectrum, the revolutionary upgrade to the ZX81 was to be known as the ZX81 Colour, as this early design concept shows.



» In 1981 no computer system, console or arcade was complete without *Pac-Man*, although the unofficial clone, *Glooper*, was a better rendition on the ZX81.

Time For Timex

The US was *the* market for home computers, and Americans were seemingly happy to throw whopping amounts of green around to get the right system. Sinclair got a taste of the transatlantic potential through international mail order, and realised a local licensee was required. Since American computer giant Timex was already assembling Sinclair machines at its plant in Dundee, it was the natural choice. The first system to bear the Timex/Sinclair hybrid brand was the TS1000: a ZX81 with double the memory (an astronomical 2K!).

Although the launch was a massive success on paper – selling in numbers that dwarfed Commodore, Apple and Tandy sales figures – posting out the ZX81 to code-hungry Americans had significant drawbacks. The lack of support, gremlin-infested quality control and long, hostile journey meant that only a third of Sinclair's computers actually arrived in operational condition. Reputation meant everything, and Sinclair's was tragically shot when it landed on US shores.



COMMUNITY – THE BEST ZX81 WEBSITES

Planet Sinclair

www.nvg.ntnu.no/sinclair/

Not only a great place to learn more about the ZX series of computers, their peripherals and localised alternatives, Planet Sinclair is also a well-presented repository of all things to do with Uncle Clive; from calculators and mini-TVs to electric bikes and the man himself.



A Profound Journey

www.apj.co.uk/zx81/zx81.asp

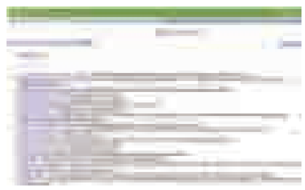
Although not specifically a Sinclair website, a reprint of a 1981 article from *Personal Computing World* can be found here. The magazine article features an in-depth test and review of Clive's new machine that provides a superb window to what people expected of the ZX81 on its release.



Open Directory Project

www.dmoz.org/Computers/Systems/Sinclair/ZX81/

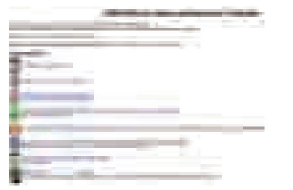
Although it's tempting to make more specific mention of the websites here, it'd be a lot more useful to post this links list for anyone wanting to uncover the ZX81's presence on the web. Some links aren't maintained, but you should still start here.



ZX81 Stuff

www.zx81stuff.org.uk/

Simon Holdsworth neat website is his own personal shrine to Sinclair's machine and features a great many items from his very own collection. If that wasn't enough it's even possible to play a great many games using a java-based emulator, just like on World of Spectrum.





The ZX81 +2

What good is a home computer without the vital add-ons that made the machine live up to the inevitably optimistic hype of its own adverts, and to the end, the ZX81 had a particularly indispensible accoutrement.

While the infamous 16K RAM pack expanded the horizons of the ZX81 exponentially, the physical presence of the memory unit caused significant brain-ache for users. With easily corroded, solder-coated contacts and no other physical support, the slightest nudge could cause a poor connection and loss of work (and even a blown motherboard). Sinclair's own product support suggested the use of Blu-tac or electrical tape as an official fix.

sound synthesiser. Essentially, this was controlled interference, but it became the primary use of the two processing modes.

In hindsight it's not entirely obvious what Sinclair Research wanted to achieve with the ZX81. It might not have reached the lofty market penetration of the consoles of the day, but for a product which saw a limited sales push and equally limited after-sales support, it begins to draw a picture of a machine which provided a learning curve stanchion rather than a culmination of computer development.

As Steve Vickers still vividly remembers, Clive Sinclair boasted far-reaching vision and wasn't a man to dedicate himself to chasing pound notes. "At first I was shocked to discover that Clive had no interest at all in being able to use the Sinclair computers himself. 'I don't know how to drive one of those things', he'd say. But that was how the company worked. He relied on being able to gather other people who could take care of those issues," says Steve.

Sinclair Research had always skirted around the circumference of colossal success; never quite achieving the kind of corporate enormity that other, usually US-based, computer companies had managed. Therefore, each product was a test of promise and risk in equal measure, and the slow start of the ZX81 suggested no indication of triggering a home computing craze. Launch sales proved the computer to be a worthwhile experiment, but its long-term value was certainly debatable.

"Commercially, the ZX81 worked as a way to earn money on the learning curve to the Spectrum," says Steve, as he recalls the time when Uncle Clive's third computer hit the shelves. "The ZX81 still had obvious deficiencies – the picture was black and white with very blocky pixels, it was slow if it had to compute while displaying, and the 1K RAM was tiny even by the standards of the day, so I don't think it was ever seen as a long-term product."

Steve makes an excellent point, and essentially captures the essence of what made the ZX81 so great. It *wasn't* a particularly impressive computer, but it did epitomise the forthcoming technology revolution. Despite a less than extraordinary specification, the very reasonable price tag and alluring system accessibility made it an easy and risk-free introduction to programming for the inquisitive technophile. By 1982, this simple appeal of low-cost experimentation had increased Sinclair Research's profits eightfold but, far more importantly, it was also proving to be the vital education for both the manufacturer and the user that would launch the next phase in home computing.



» The ZX80 Lite: This is the ZX81's incredibly neat PCB after the custom chip replaced the majority of silicon on its predecessor's motherboard.

"If you wanted to write letters and do accounts on a computer, the ZX81 was not your best buy. But as something really cheap that would let you play with programming – a kind of software version of a Meccano set – there was nothing to touch it. I personally found it really useful for numerical calculations that I needed to do while working on the Spectrum ROM," explains Steve. "So I suppose I found it good for what computers were invented for – numerical work."



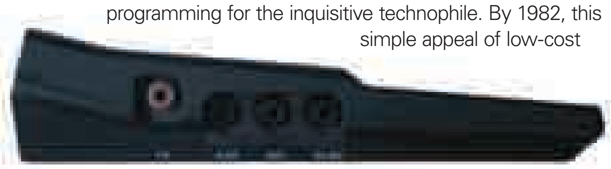
» The aluminised paper might have been a bit of an inconvenience, but the ZX81's printer was a compact and efficient piece of kit.

As the US videogame market disappeared up its own… cartridge slot, the British code junkies shrugged their shoulders without concern. Consoles were dead, but we now had affordable, accessible home computing to fall back on, so we simply and organically chose our new weapon of choice; be it Spectrum, Commodore or Amstrad. For those of us looking to play with a bit of code and enjoy a bit of gaming on the side, it really was as simple and casual as that.

But it is thanks to stalwart, unsung heroes like the ZX81 and its pioneering developers that home computing had already moved beyond novelty to become an integral part of working-class life, so show a little respect next time you need to wedge a door open and use an Atari 2600 instead, eh?



» The ZX81 programming bible was written by the ROM programmer, Steve Vickers. Check it out in its entirety here: www.worldofspectrum.org/ZX81BasicProgramming/



» It might be an unwholesome travesty, but it's not impossible to see from the shape why disgruntled ZX81 users found alternative use for their computer when the door wouldn't stay open.

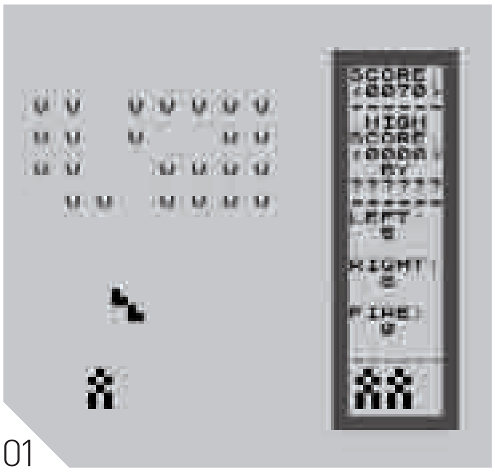


» Picking up commercial games for the ZX81 wasn't easy, but there was a tonne of programming books that played to the real purpose of Clive's awesome little machine.

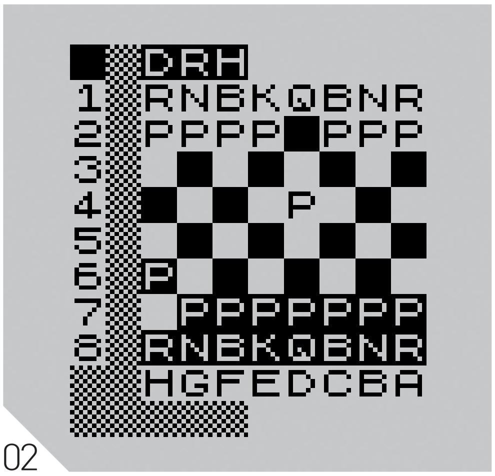
SINCLAIR ZX81

PERFECT TEN GAMES

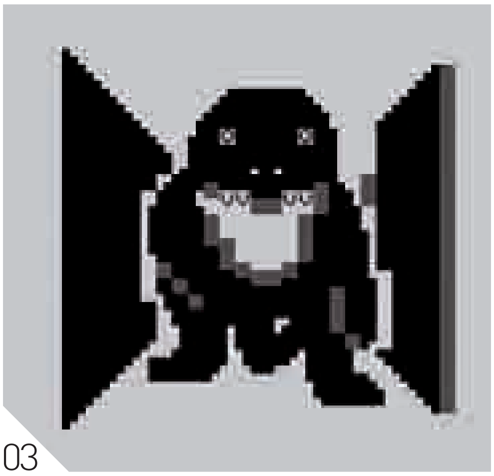
Be it ever so humble, there was nothing quite like the ZX81. So, to celebrate this early computer we've chosen ten of its greatest games for you to enjoy. If we've managed to miss any of your favourites then feel free to let us know by visiting the forums at www.retrogamer.net/forums

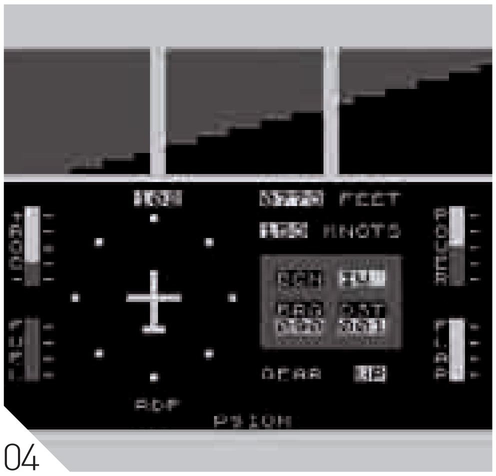


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GALAXIANS

» **RELEASED:** 1982
» **PUBLISHED BY:** ARTIC
» **CREATED BY:** WILLIAM J WRAY
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** GALAXY WARRIOR

01 There's a slew of *Space Invaders* and *Galaxian* clones available on the ZX81 (hardly surprising when you consider the massive popularity of them), but this conversion of *Galaxian* by Artic is easily one of our favourites. The action is absolutely relentless and you'll have your hands full dodging the many flying enemies and the hail of bullets they constantly bombard you with.

Granted, it lacks the same attack patterns from the original game, but, in a way, the complete randomness of the alien attacks simply adds to the excitement, as you never quite know what to expect. This is a superb clone of the hit coin-op and is definitely worth tracking down if you love a good blaster.

1K ZX CHESS

» **RELEASED:** 1983
» **PUBLISHED BY:** ARTIC
» **CREATED BY:** DAVID HORNE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ESPIONAGE ISLAND

02 Considering the sheer number of potential moves available in chess, we're amazed to find it so well replicated on the ZX81. Created with less than 1K of RAM (so you can play it without the need for a RAM pack). Okay, so certain rules – queening, castling and en passant capture – didn't make the cut, but this is still a resoundingly solid effort and proves just how talented early coders (in this case, David Horne) actually were.

The computer AI takes a fair amount of time to plan all of its moves, but the actual game itself plays a pretty good game of chess, so you can forgive it for the lengthy pauses. A solid adaptation of the classic strategy game.

3D MONSTER MAZE

» **RELEASED:** 1981
» **PUBLISHED BY:** JK GREYE
» **CREATED BY:** MALCOLM EVANS
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** CATACOMBS

03 Survival horror may have been a phrase first coined by *Resident Evil*, but it could've easily applied to Malcolm Evans' massive hit. Boasting sensational visuals and an incredibly slick maze, traversing the huge labyrinth was truly terrifying and scared a generation of gamers.

It may have sported a paltry 16K of RAM and no sound, but *3D Monster Maze* remained an amazingly atmospheric title, which, in a way, was elevated by its clumsy control system that saw all the arrow keys laid out on a single row. An instant classic that, even today, remains a truly mind-blowing experience. Perfect proof that you don't need state of the art visuals to create a truly great game.

FLIGHT SIMULATION

» **RELEASED:** 1982
» **PUBLISHED BY:** SINCLAIR RESEARCH
» **CREATED BY:** PSION
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** CITY PATROL

04 Ask people about their favourite ZX81 game and *Flight Simulation* almost always charts highly – usually in the number one spot.

Maybe it's because you'd sit there making engine noises as your plane flew towards its landing strip, but we'd say that it was mainly due to the fact that it simply looked astonishing on a machine that normally required you to guide an asterisk through a simple-looking maze. While it was possible to just play the exhilarating final approach it was just as fun to simply take to the skies (you could add wind for an extra challenge) and just fly around to your heart's content.

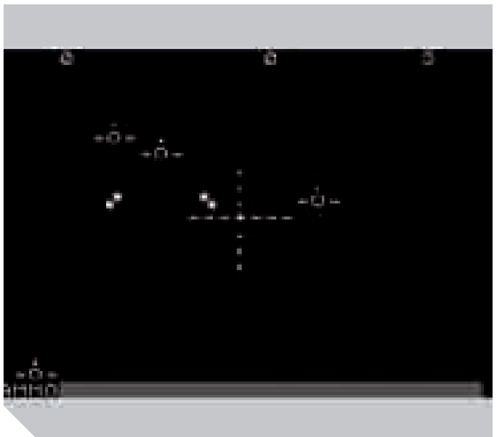
NIGHT GUNNER

» **RELEASED:** 1982
» **PUBLISHED BY:** SOFTSYNCH
» **CREATED BY:** DIGITAL INTEGRATION
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ALIEN INVASION

05 Who would've thought that a game made entirely of '–' and '0' signs could turn into one of the ZX81's most enjoyable games? No, we wouldn't have thought so either, but replaying the wonderful *Night Gunner* reaffirms that this is exactly the case.

Moving at a very impressive speed, you fly through the air taking out as many enemy planes as you can before your ammo runs out. Like many ZX81 games it's incredibly simplistic to look at, but our active imaginations easily saw those basic characters as magnificent planes plummeting earthwards as we filled them full of lead. A solid shooter that gave you plenty of bang for your money (even if you couldn't hear the bangs).

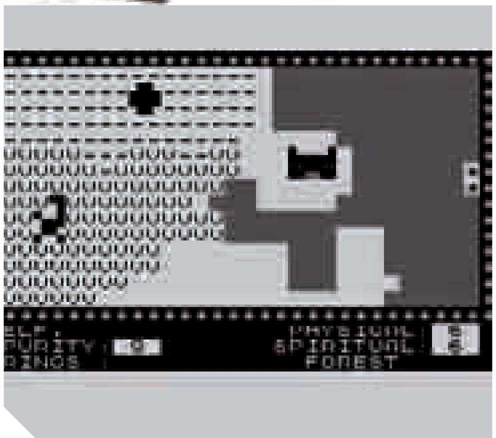




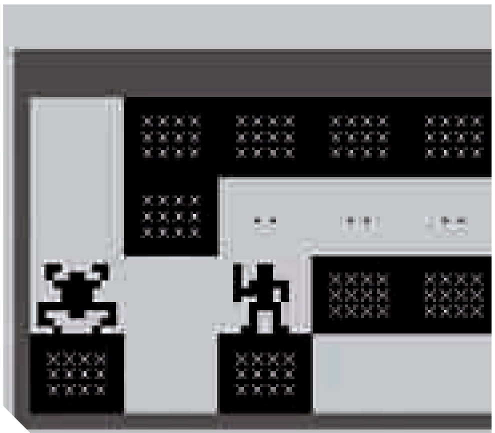
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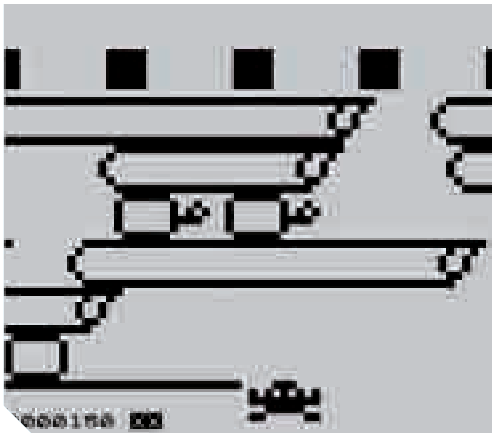
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3D DEFENDER

- » **RELEASED:** 1981
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** JK GREYE
- » **CREATED BY:** JK GREYE SOFTWARE
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** BREAKOUT

06 Like *Night Gunner, 3D Defender* has you controlling a pair of cross hairs and trying to gun down as many enemies as possible. Unlike *Night Gunner*, however, *3D Defender* is set in space and features some absolutely massive UFOs that really do scare the absolute bejesus out of you as they zoom in and out of your view.

It's certainly a lot trickier to control than *Night Gunner* (you'll spend your first few goes crashing into the ground at every opportunity, and the collision detection is rather iffy), but once everything clicks you'll discover a title that's just as much fun and a hell of a lot slicker. And you really have to see those UFOs. Fantastic stuff.

BLACK CRYSTAL

- » **RELEASED:** 1982
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** CARNELL
- » **CREATED BY:** CARNELL
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** VOLCANIC DUNGEON

07 Not to be confused with the Jim Henson movie starring ugly puppets, *Black Crystal* is a great graphic adventure that sees you traversing a variety of different environments to destroy the gem of the title. Spread across six impressive-looking maps, you're given a variety of tasks ranging from retrieving keys to fighting dragons.

It's a very entertaining romp that plays up well to the strengths of the ZX81 and delivers a truly immersive experience that many other adventures on the machine simply can't match. It's a little fiddly in places, and it's all too easy to die, but the gripping gameplay will constantly push you forward for one more go.

MAZOGS

- » **RELEASED:** 1982
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** BUG BYTE
- » **CREATED BY:** DON PRIESTLEY
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** MANIC MINER

08 When Don Priestley's *Mazogs* appeared on the ZX81 it's fair to say that its arrival was something of a revelation. Featuring absolutely huge characters and set in a massive maze, it was an incredibly slick release that made virtually all its peers look absolutely archaic.

With so many maze games featuring dollar signs being chased by asterisks, the huge sprites of *Mazogs* (created by the Sinclair's Sugar Cube Graphics) certainly left an impression on people. Luckily the game was just as good as its visuals, and many ZX81 owners will, no doubt, fondly remember hurtling through the huge mazes, picking up treasures and using their sword to battle the evil Mazogs.

FROGGER

- » **RELEASED:** 1981
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** CORNSOFT
- » **CREATED BY:** CORNSOFT/SEGA
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** N/A

09 Stuart Campbell has already raved about this early arcade conversion back in issue 38's definitive roundup of *Frogger*, but here's another reminder as to why it's so great. First released in 1981, *Frogger* is not only an incredibly faithful conversion of the popular coin-op, but it also pelts along at a fair old speed.

Honestly, you'd be forgiven for thinking it's running on another machine. Granted, the original arcade screen has been split into two – the first section has you crossing the road, while the second sees you hopping to your pad – but this is otherwise a fantastic conversion that proves just what feats were possible on the humble home micro.

THE GAUNTLET

- » **RELEASED:** 1982
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** COLOURMATIC
- » **CREATED BY:** COLOURMATIC
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** N/A

10 Considering the rather flaky processor beating away inside the heart of the ZX81 it has churned out a fair few nippy shoot-'em-ups in its time. *The Gauntlet* is a perfect example, and while it's nothing we've not seen before (it's basically a clone of Konami's excellent *Scramble*), it is a very slick product that manages to push all the right buttons.

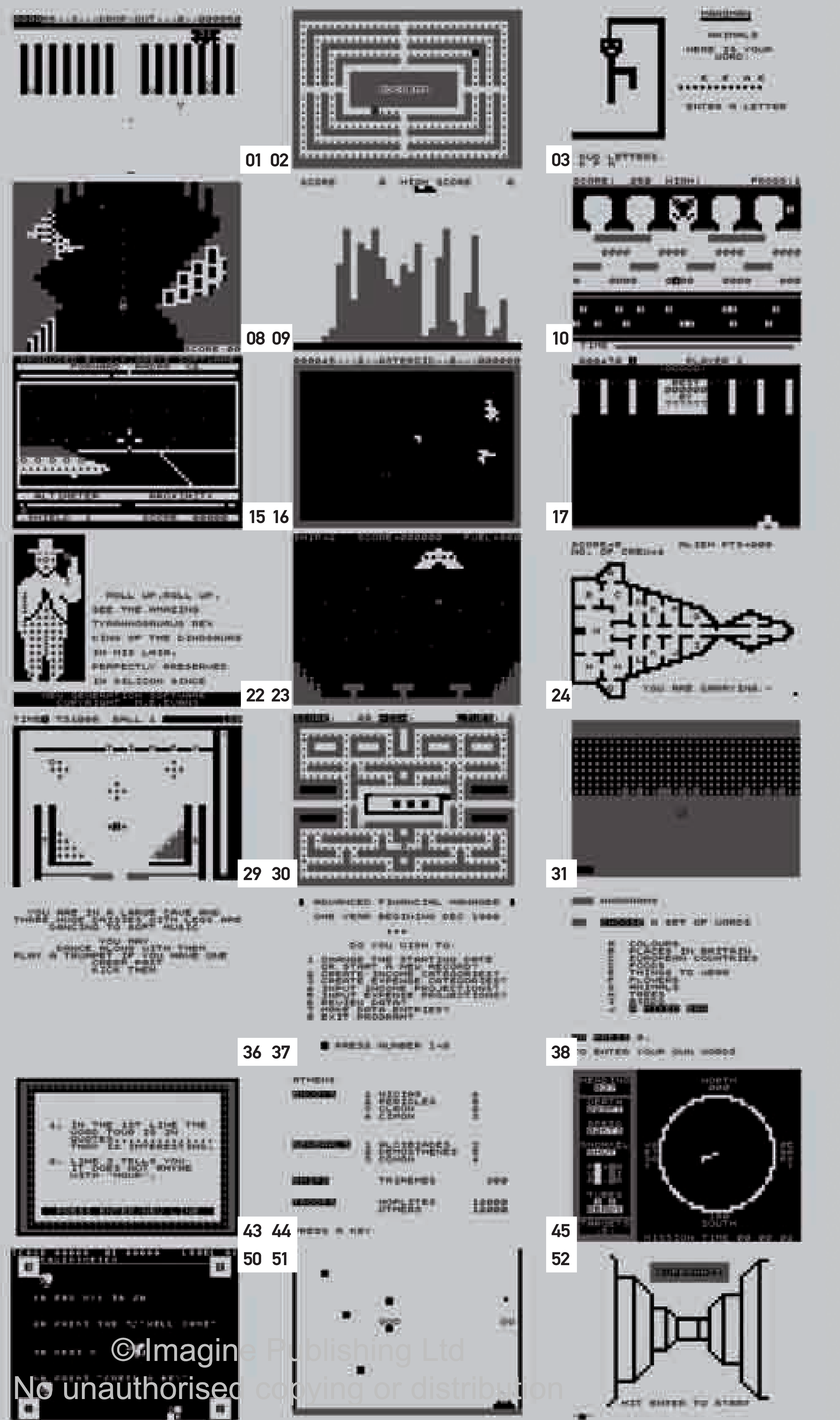
It certainly takes quite a while to get used to the huge size of your spaceship, but once you've worked out all of the controls you'll soon be shooting and bombing enemy emplacements with ease. It does get ridiculously tough as the game progresses, but if you're looking for a classy blaster you'll be hard-pressed to find anything better than *The Gauntlet*.

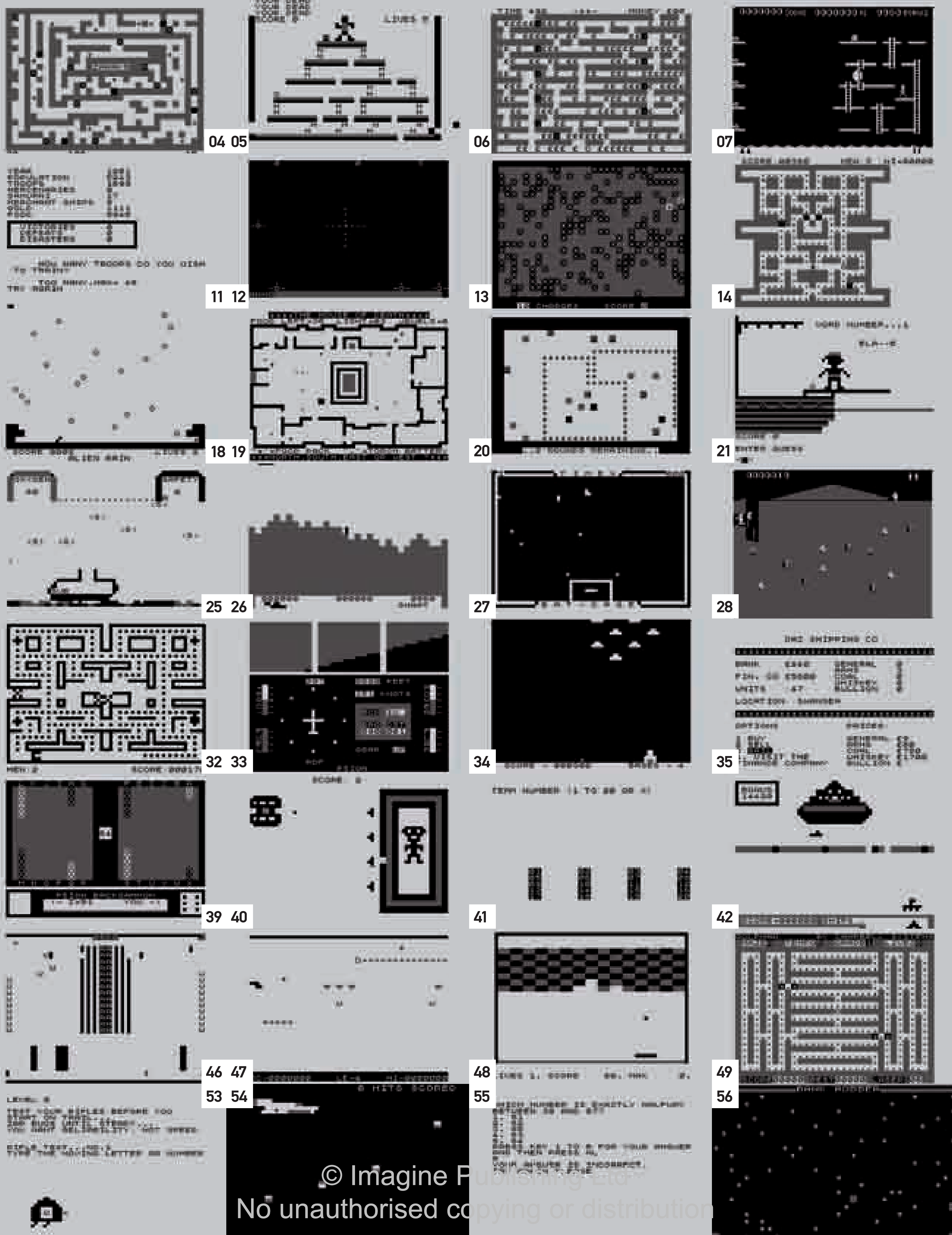


ZX81
and the rest...

Replaying some of these old games was enough to start weeping huge nostalgic tears of joy. See how many of the following games you can get through before you succumb to the same thing

01 ALIEN DROP-OUT
02 DODGEMS
03 HANGMAN
04 ZARAKS
05 KONG'S REVENGE
06 MONSTER MINE
07 ROCKET MAN
08 TAI
09 BOMBER
10 FROGGY
11 WARLORD
12 NIGHT GUNNER
13 SABOTAGE
14 GHOST HUNTERS
15 3D DEFENDER
16 ASTEROIDS
17 UFO
18 ALIEN RAIN
19 HOUSE OF DEATH
20 RAM RUNNER
21 WALK THE PLANK
22 3D MONSTER MAZE
23 LUNAR RESCUE
24 ALIEN
25 MARINE RESCUE
26 SCRAMBLE
27 BAT CAGE
28 FORTY NINER
29 PINBALL
30 ZUCKMAN
31 BREAKOUT
32 DAMPER/GLOOPER
33 FLIGHT SIMULATOR
34 NAMTIR RAIDERS
35 OCEAN TRADER
36 KEYS TO GONDRUN
37 ADVANCED FINANCIAL MANAGER
38 WORDPLAY 1
39 BACKGAMMON
40 FORTRESS OF ZORLAC
41 FOOTBALL LEAGUE
42 INVASION FORCE
43 KRAKIT
44 PELOPONNESIAN WAR
45 SEAWOLF
46 COSMIC GUERILLA
47 TEMPEST
48 THRO' THE WALL
49 GULPMAN
50 MICRO MOUSE GOES DE-BUGGING
51 CENTIPEDE
52 SUPER MAZE
53 PIONEER TRAIL
54 JD ARCADES
55 FAMILY QUIZ
56 BANK ROBBER




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ZOO KEEPER

TAKE CARE, THESE ANIMALS ARE WILD!



- **PUBLISHER:** TAITO
- **RELEASED:** 1982
- **GENRE:** COLLECT-'EM-UP
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £50+ (ORIGINAL PCB)



HISTORY

If you have access to Sky or Freeview and feel like lounging around in front of the TV for a week, you'll find a fair few shows dedicated to various zoos and the staff that work there. While they often depict exciting encounters with belligerent rhinos or expectant lions, they never manage to capture the excitement and chaos that takes place in Taito's wonderful *Zoo Keeper*.

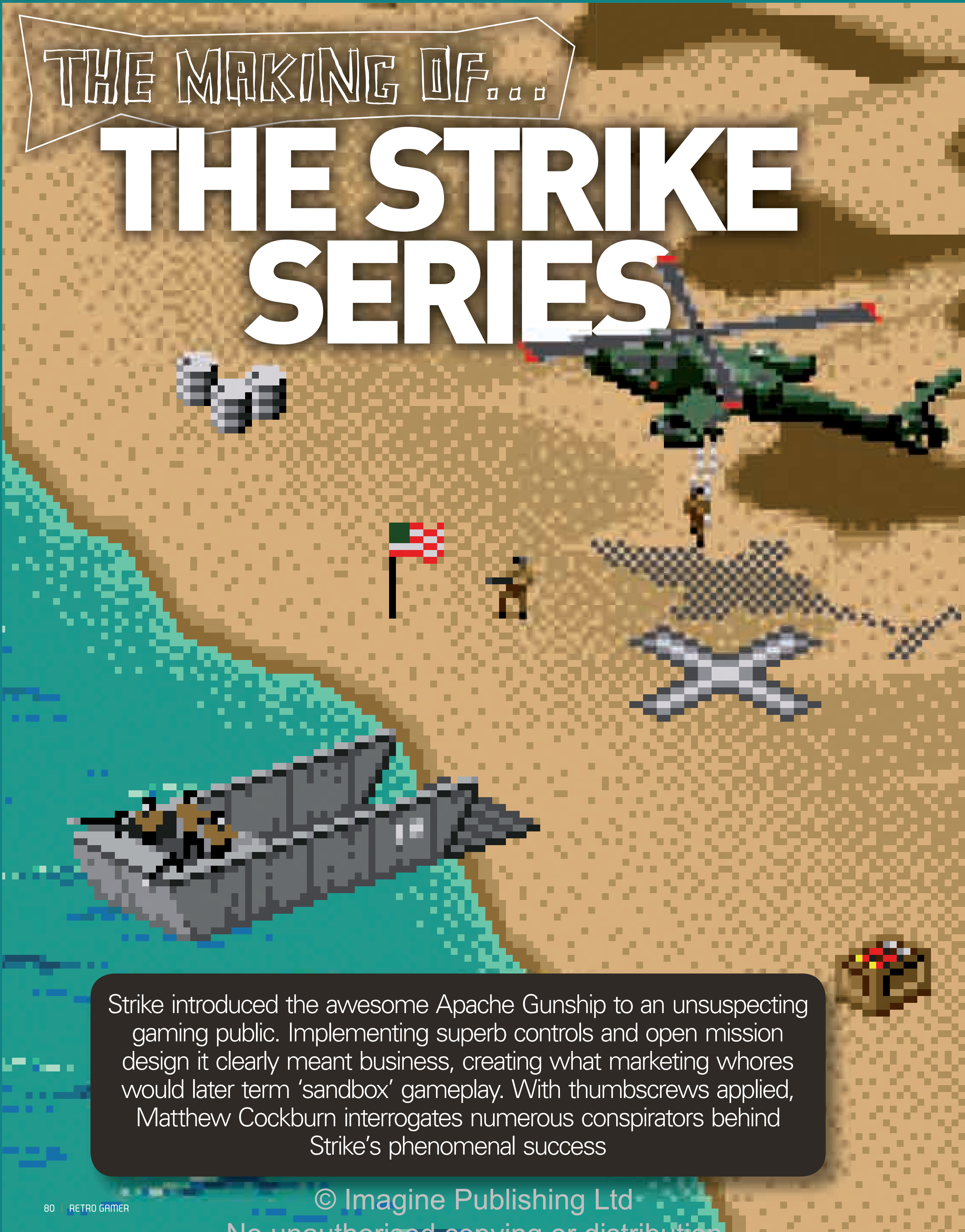
While it features a variety of bonus rounds that require you to leap up the screen Mario-style and save your sweetheart from a coconut-throwing monkey, the majority of *Zoo Keeper*'s levels have you trying to capture and contain as many dangerous animals as possible. Initially starting off in a brick pen, the enraged beasts are not at all happy about their captivity and will pummel away at the walls until they are able to break free. Taking control of the titular Zoo Keeper, your aim is to contain as many animals as possible by running over gaps in the cage with your magic brick-laying trainers and plugging all the holes.

You only have a set amount of time on each stage and once the timer has run down you will be rewarded for each animal that you successfully managed to capture. Any animals that escaped will run around the outside of the enclosure and even the slightest touch with them will prove fatal. Luckily, a net randomly appears on each stage for a few seconds and if you're able to grab it you can capture any escaped animals, and so, hopefully, boost your score at the end of the stage.

Fast, amazingly frantic and with the sort of collision detection that only a mother could love, *Zoo Keeper* harks back to the days when graphics were chunky and sound could make your ears pop. Worry not though, for while it looks a little long in the tooth it's a supremely playable game that's far more enjoyable than watching someone on telly with their hand up a gorilla's arse.




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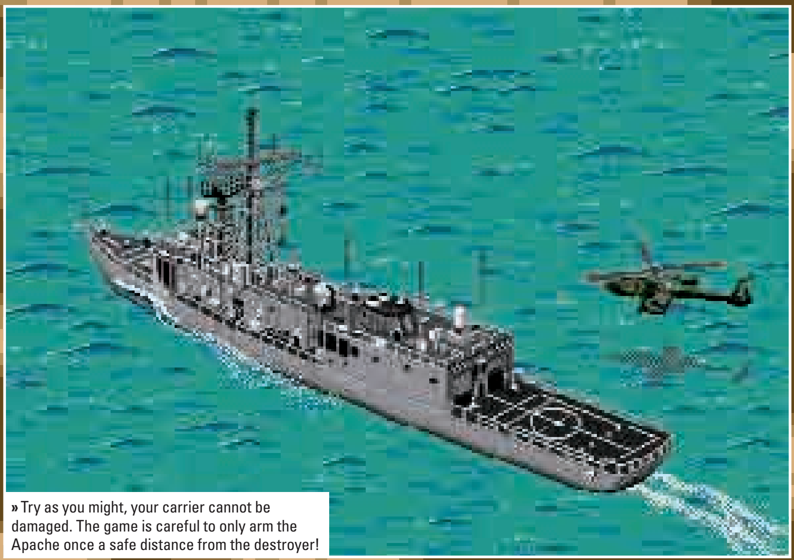


THE MAKING OF...

THE STRIKE SERIES

Strike introduced the awesome Apache Gunship to an unsuspecting gaming public. Implementing superb controls and open mission design it clearly meant business, creating what marketing whores would later term 'sandbox' gameplay. With thumbscrews applied, Matthew Cockburn interrogates numerous conspirators behind Strike's phenomenal success

Armed to the teeth with Hydra and Hellfire missiles, not to mention a ferocious 30mm automatic cannon, the AH-64 Apache is a serious piece of military hardware. With a strike capacity equal to 20 tanks and as a hundred YouTube videos testify, you better not be on the wrong end of this helicopter gunship. Now imagine trying to fit this fearsome machine into a convincing game, armed with only a handful of colours and pixels.



» Try as you might, your carrier cannot be damaged. The game is careful to only arm the Apache once a safe distance from the destroyer!

Desert Strike did exactly that and broke new ground as something of an archetype for modern strategy games. It featured resource management and an assortment of missions, from rescuing POWs to all out military Armageddon. *Strike* demanded a respect for conservation of ammo and fuel, offering a thoughtful approach to gameplay. Crashing on to the scene in 1992 it created a frenzied media response, but not because of its cerebral gunplay.

Hot on the heels of the first Gulf War, journalists painted *Desert Strike* as a glorification of the conflict against Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Hardly helped by the game's blatant references to the Middle East, with a terrorist leader known as 'General Kilbaba' invading "a small but wealthy Arab Emirate." Comparisons were easy to make, and tensions soon escalated to scenes of US troops burning copies of the game outside retail stores, sparking worldwide publicity from CNN to the BBC. Fortunately, the gaming press recognised genuine innovation. *Mean Machines* applauded it as, "One of the finest Mega Drive blasters," and *Mega Tech* declared, "Unless you're a moralising kind of pacifist there's no excuse for you not to have a copy of this." With an intelligent mission system, lavish detail bestowed upon every sprite and an unforgettable orgy of destruction, it's easy to understand why. Which makes it even more extraordinary that this absolute feast of gaming pleasure came from a man who claims, "At that time I was not a game programmer and not even a game player." A startling statement from *Strike*'s architect and programmer Mike Posehn.

During a golden age for Electronic Arts, *Desert Strike* joined a host of other classics. *Road Rash*, *Mutant League Football* and *Wing Commander*, spawning the highly profitable videogame franchise that today typifies EA. At that time EA was based on the artist/studio model originally organised along the lines of a record label as Mike explains, "The idea was to sign up artists (game programmers/creators), give them advances against future royalties to carry them through game development and then the studio (EA) would provide the sales and marketing expertise. I was one of those 'artists' – I was not an employee."

Rewind a few years and we discover Mike's EA signing began with a little-known Personal Information Manager for the PC. "In 1984 EA acquired my small company and our flagship product, Get Organized. It was the first PIM for PCs. At that time EA had seen the success Broderbund had with Print Shop and wanted a product for the general market," he says. EA considered Print Shop "a lottery ticket you don't have to pay for," something it hoped to repeat with Get Organized. But it didn't go to plan. "Unfortunately, the product was ahead of its time and turned out to not be a good fit for EA," admits Mike. "When sales sagged, we all got canned. Fortunately, the Amiga was about to be released and Tom Casey and I started work on Deluxe Video. We got a publishing deal with EA and it sold very well."

High on success, Mike played with some ideas for a flight sim aimed at the IBM Personal PC inspirationally named, '*Fly*.' IBM cancelled the project, but Mike was eager to continue work on a flight sim-type game. So he spoke with EA founder and President Trip Hawkins in what turned out to be a pivotal meeting. "Trip Hawkins suggested I create a game

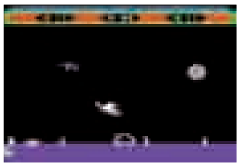




"UNLESS YOU'RE A MORALISING KIND OF PACIFIST THERE'S NO EXCUSE FOR YOU NOT TO HAVE A COPY OF THIS" – MIKE PATTERSON, MEGA TECH MAGAZINE

LIFTING ME HIGHER

Perhaps it's fate that another Broderbund-published title influenced Mike's career, in the release of *Choplifter* on the Apple II. Rescuing POWs in prison breaks and whisking them back to HQ under a hail of artillery and aerial attacks. Even basic momentum physics were implemented in the choppers' movements, yet another inspiration improved upon by *Desert Strike*. Beyond the gameplay, both games were controversially associated with real-world events. *Desert Strike*'s is well documented in this article. Released in 1982, *Choplifter* was supposedly based on a very different Middle Eastern situation, bearing a vague resemblance to the Iranian US hostage crisis and attempted rescue in 1981.







» The *Strike* team was an eclectic bunch, ranging from a dentist to utilitarian programmer, as the brainchild of *Desert Strike*, Mike Posehn, demonstrates with his previous efforts, Get Organized and Deluxe Video.

THE STRIKE SERIES

IN THE KNOW



» **RELEASE DATES:** 1992 MEGA DRIVE [FOLLOWED BY MULTI-PLATFORM OUT-OF HOUSE CONVERSIONS]

» **DEVELOPER:** MIKE POSEHN/ GRANITE BAY SOFTWARE

» **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS

» **GENRE:** STRATEGY SHOOT-'EM-UP

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £2+

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

JUNGLE STRIKE (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: MEGA DRIVE [FOLLOWED BY MULTI-PLATFORM CONVERSIONS]
YEAR: 1993

URBAN STRIKE
SYSTEM: MEGA DRIVE [FOLLOWED BY MULTI-PLATFORM CONVERSIONS]
YEAR: 1994



for the new Sega Genesis that was being released soon. He said that he had always liked *Choplifter* for the Apple II, because it was a cool feeling to fly a helicopter and rescue people. He thought I should write a game like that." Having only seen *Choplifter* in action, Mike confesses he's never actually played the game, again asserting himself as a non-game player. "I was working from a clean slate," he says. "I liked the isometric look and the way sprites could be used to animate vehicles. When I was a kid way back in the Fifties, I played with Matchbox toys, so that probably guided the scale of the chopper in some way."

This was part of *Strike*'s genius; taking the toys from our childhood and breathing life into the inanimate objects on screen. It's something we always dreamed of, but instead were fobbed off by cheap plastic American army sets. Mike turned to his friend Tim Calvin, an accomplished 3D modeller and practising dentist, to design many of the 'Matchbox' vehicle models featured in *Strike* games. Hardly your typical pixel pusher, but Tim had the skills that would prove vital within the free-form isometric world of *Desert Strike*. "EA producers contracted me for specific vehicles/weapons," he explains. "They assigned the colour palette for each, usually four shades of one colour, such as brown or green, with the generic black, white, red and blue, which were usually part of the 16 available pixel colours. The sprites were made from specific views of my model rotated around a single point at a specific angle." However, the process was exhaustive, as Tim reflects, "Later on, I realised the waste of those 'big' files and rendered simple models into sprite size, then spent a majority of my time hand painting them. This was an interesting dilemma at the time because EA could justify paying more to a modeller/renderer than to a pixel artist, but they liked my work and didn't want to know how much time was spent modelling versus painting. Their bosses were getting the results they wanted and the cost made sense to them." He adds, "When I attempted painting the sprites freestyle, without rendering a model, they didn't like the results."

In an age of high definition the technical limitations of yesteryears games are easily forgotten. *Strike*'s active playing field had to fit within an area no more than 320 by 240 pixels. Not enough for Mike's vision, he had to overcome these technical constraints by implementing some novel features. "Choosing a scale for the screen was a complex trade-off – you want to see as much of the world as you can, but the chopper and people must be big enough to be interesting," he says. Far from the typical clunking isometric view imposed by lesser games, *Strike*'s terrain rolled off the screen with ease creating an expansive gaming arena. Through twists and turns, the screen kept pace with your Apache admirably, maintaining a tight focus on action with zero on-screen clutter. This was thanks to an innovative camera system devised by Mike. "I spent a lot of time on that," he says. "With so little screen real estate, it was critical to show the most important part of the game world. So I devised a dynamic camera that traversed an 'elliptical' path as the chopper yawed through 360 degrees. It gave preference to showing what was in front of the chopper, but the camera movement also had momentum to make a smooth transition in view."

It's probably the most overlooked facet, yet the dynamic camera fired *Strike* into the triple-A league of games and set it apart from your average shooter. Screenshots do little to convey just how well the system worked. Although not without great sacrifice, as Mike explains how he had to work night and day tinkering around for several months on "just the screen and helicopter physics." The latter were especially well tuned under the so-called 'with momentum' control scheme as Mike applied a little psychology. "It's very important to have realistic movement in a game," he says. "Humans observe how things move and create a 'model' inside their heads. It's not a math model, but one based on experience by observing how objects fall, bounce, break… etc, in the real world. When they see an action on a computer screen, they are put off if its motion doesn't match the model in their head."



» One of many side missions, save the pilot and blow away the F-15 to keep the plane's design from falling into enemy hands.

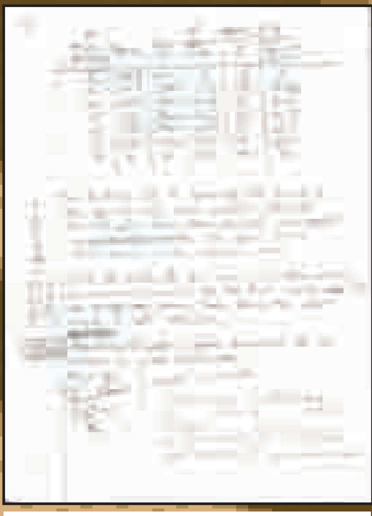


» X marks the spot where saved MIA troops can be deployed and your Apache outfitted with more armour, with fuel and ammo supplies also nearby.



» Don't worry about the futile efforts of enemy troops firing upon you, it's these missile platforms that present the greatest threat.

"I WAS NOT A GAME PROGRAMMER AND NOT EVEN A GAME PLAYER" - MIKE POSEHN, [DESERT STRIKE CONCEPT/ DESIGNER] ON THE BEGINNING OF DESERT STRIKE



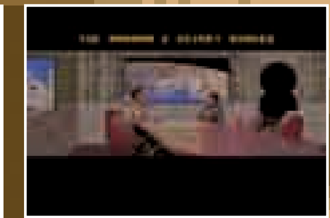
» Mad scribbling from Mike Posehn showing intricate calculations for the helicopter 'momentum' physics. We're reliably informed these are second order differential equations in six degrees of freedom!

Looking over the basic physics equations for the chopper motion, it turns out Mike is something of a rocket scientist. A PhD in Mechanical Engineering, specialising in Dynamic Systems and Automatic Control, put him at an advantage from the start. Creating accurate chopper movements, or at least what the layman would consider natural. It wasn't plain sailing, however, as some doubted Mike's wisdom at a preliminary technology review, "There was a great resistance at EA to my choice of a third-person point-of-view with first-person control inputs," he says. "One EA producer, in particular, strongly objected to my 'from cockpit with momentum' control. I hated the alternative 'from above' scheme, but I had to put it in as a compromise to get the game approved."

Given the green light, Mike teamed up with John Manley (of EA) to write the game's script. "John was a serious game player and had a great sense of fun," he says. "I liked the idea of playing the game in a sandbox (go anywhere and do anything) and he knew the value of having a storyline and game puzzle to solve as the player advanced through levels. Together we came up with the idea of a SNAFU [Situation Normal: All F**ked Up] that would let you roam the world freely, but let you know when you f**ked up by doing something that would prevent you achieving the mission. I disliked a lot of common game features, like defeating a series of bosses or getting 'power-ups'. We settled on picking up extra ammo or armour."

The SNAFU system offered tangible 'sandbox' gameplay with a variety of missions alongside your main objectives. Not only providing a welcome diversion but also a functional element. Rescuing the MIAs (Missing In Action) replenished armour, while you could destroy a downed F-15 and retrieve the pilot for an expert marksman or winch operator. This mechanic was very natural, providing an intuitive path for players to follow. Fusing the game with a good narrative was a delicate matter that Tony Barnes, co-director of the franchise, understood all too well. "The process for creating a great *Strike* game is part mercenary, part research assistant, part political science major, part movie director and, of course, game designer," he explains. "John [Manley] and I would watch tons of CNN and action movies for ideas that were fantastic yet probable. The key was figuring out how to take this media and weave it into the gameplay of a strike game. Too many times, people get caught up in the whole cinematic thing and forget they're making a game."

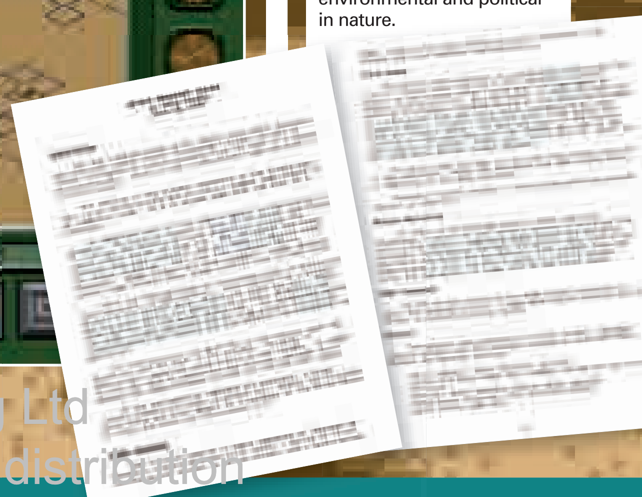
Mike continued at the helm with sequels *Jungle Strike* and *Urban Strike*. Following the original's success on the Mega Drive with multiple conversions of all three *Strike* games through the SNES, Master System and even a Game Boy version. Both sequels paid respect to the originals blueprint as Tony explains, "We identified each mechanic that was core to the *Strike* experience and made sure they were maintained. Then, when it came time to make additions, we asked,



» One of many cinematic episodes depicting the madman General Kilbaba, usually slapping about his commanders like evil dictators do!

DESIGN DOCUMENT 1.0

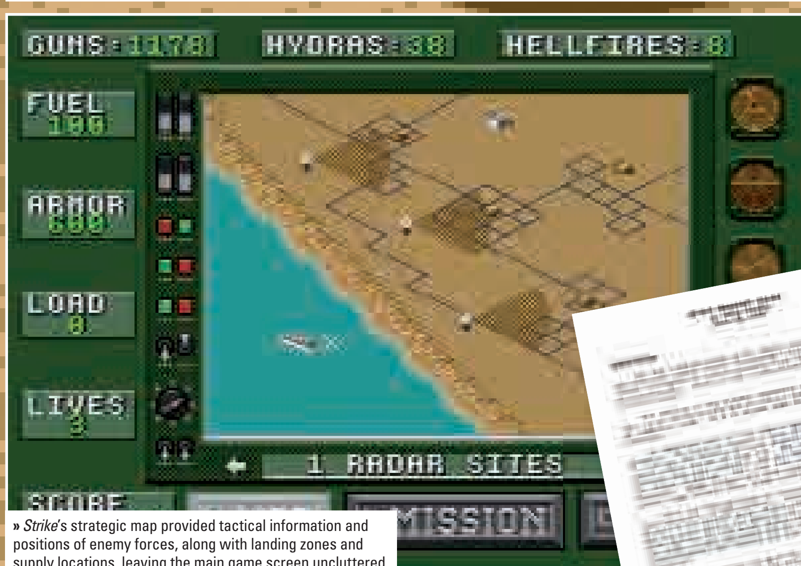
Dated 18 June 1990 the design documents contain some fascinating insights into the game's conception; which, much to our surprise, started out as '*Beirut Breakout*', originally based on the trouble in Lebanon. Those with a keen eye will notice the key factors that made the final cut in *Desert Strike*, including an 'isometric view' citing the vehicular design as animated 'Micro Machines'. With an emphasis on the cinematic sequences referencing the introduction for *Revenge Of Shinobi* as the influence for *Desert Strike*'s visually impressive scenes. It's surprising just how close the original concept resembles the finished product. Even at this early stage of development the importance of 'smooth animation' is noted for realistic reproduction of the various vehicles in *Strike*. The document also outlines a point system to temper players' destructive nature, deducting from your score for bad side effects both environmental and political in nature.







» American adverts are always the best, [Top: *Desert Strike*] originally part of the 'EA Air Force' promotion, *Desert Strike* soon established [Above: *Urban Strike*] it's own identity as the relentless *Strike* franchise evolved.



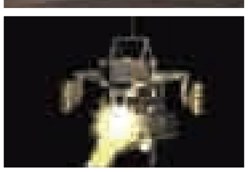
» *Strike*'s strategic map provided tactical information and positions of enemy forces, along with landing zones and supply locations, leaving the main game screen uncluttered.

THE STRIKE SERIES

FUTURE STRIKE

Striking a note with the so-called 'war on terror' in modern times, '*Future Strike*'s' teaser made the bold statement, 'New Threats, Demand, New Solutions.' The game wasn't released, but it's rumoured it morphed into *Future Cop LAPD* on the PS. When probed, the *Strike* team revealed a very different project. Not for next-gen 32-bit platforms, but a final send off for the Mega Drive. Only a script for the game exists, written by Tony Barnes and marked 'Copyright 1995 EA Confidential.' With some persuasion we got a few details from Tony on the *Future Strike* game that never was. "All was going well. We were doing experiments rendering all of the assets, ala *Donkey Kong Country*, and they were looking good when confusion over platform kicked in. In the US, there was still a market for 16-bit titles, but Japan and the UK were more interested in 32-bit stuff, so the project was mothballed."







» *Desert Strike* hosted it's own spoof network but it's the game itself that made the headlines!

'Does it still fit with the core mechanics? The core 'feel' of *Strike*?' Often people lose focus of what brought people to a game in the first place when they make a sequel. If somebody likes blowing stuff up, you don't turn it into a stealth game for the next one. Sounds simple, but you'd be surprised how many people mess up core-mechanics."

Post-*Urban Strike*, the team worked on '*32-bit Strike*', which later evolved into *Soviet Strike*. The game started development on Trip Hawkins' 3DO. When it was evident that 32-bit *Strike* was going to take over a year to develop, the project switched to the PlayStation. *Nuclear Strike* soon followed, impressing a new generation of gamers. Although Mike took a back seat on both projects, "I was involved in the design of *Soviet Strike* and some initial programming. Moving the *Strike* series on to the Sony platform required a team of programmers, so I was not able to do it all by myself. Working on a programming team headed by EA didn't interest me, so I didn't continue to have an active programming role. I retained an interest and continued to receive royalties on both *Soviet Strike* and *Nuclear Strike*."

This was in stark contrast to *Strike*'s beginning on the original *Desert Strike*. "I spent two years working with only some meagre advances," says Mike. "But with the hope that there would be a big royalty payoff." Spanning a series of five *Strike* games, the gamble paid off. *Desert Strike* stands as a technically impressive game holding up today much better than its 32-bit successors with clean pseudo-3D graphics, a classic thrashing guitar soundtrack courtesy of **Retro Gamer** darling Rob Hubbard and gameplay that entertains as the thinking man's shmup.

What of the controversial angle pedalled by news networks? Tony offers his two cents, "The news and people outside of the game industry's view of games is a funny one. People are always looking for stories that get people's attention and stories about things doing good don't sell as well as exploitive ones. It's the nature of the entertainment industry and something you just have to shake your head at." Mike adds, "I think the use of Iraq maps in the manual and on the box was a failure of imagination and nothing more. In my experience, paranoia and conspiracy theories are usually better explained by general haste, ignorance or stupidity of the suspects."

The last thought is Tim's, who reveals what he believes to be the secret behind *Strike*'s success. "The games used larger-sized still images in the introduction to show what the vehicles/weapons looked like. The actual sprites used in the games were a long way from those, but the image is in the eye of the beholder and gamers saw what they wanted. This aspect of gaming may be a key to why one person likes to play and another has no use for it. One allows his imagination to fill in the details, while another is put off by the lack of reality." Maybe we need look no further than the staged battles played out in our childhood fantasies that *Strike* brought so vividly to life. Although we dare say, 38 Hydra missiles, 8 Hellfires and a thousand rounds of cannon ammunition, with impunity to use them, probably had a lot to do with it.



» One of *Strike*'s many multi-tiered missions. After diplomats escape the embassy under siege in that inconspicuous yellow bus, your Apache must protect the occupants until they flee the city.



» General Kilbaba offered the best security for a visiting committee on areas of outstanding natural beauty!

Thanks to Mike Posehn, Tim Calvin and Tony 'Twitch' Barnes for creating this cerebral franchise and indulging our curiosity with lots of great insider information and design documents. You read it here first!





RINGS OF SATURN

SEGA'S SATURN CONSOLE MAY NOT HAVE BEEN THE MASSIVE WORLDWIDE SUCCESS THE COMPANY HAD HOPED FOR, BUT EMAP'S SEGA SATURN MAGAZINE IS NEVERTHELESS FONDLY REMEMBERED AS ONE OF THE BEST VIDEOGAME PUBLICATIONS OF THE PAST 20 YEARS. DAMIEN MCFERRAN SPEAKS TO THE TEAM THAT MADE IT HAPPEN

IN THE KNOW

- » **NAME:** OFFICIAL SEGA SATURN MAGAZINE
- » **ISSUES:** 37
- » **ERA:** 1995 - 1998
- » **PAGES:** APPROX 100
- » **KEY STAFF:** RICHARD LEADBETTER, SAM HICKMAN, GARY CUTLACK, LEE NUTTER, DAVE KELSALL, TOM GUISE, RAD AUTOMATIC

It's the middle of the Nineties and the 32-bit war looms ominously on the horizon. Publishing giant EMAP – previously responsible for the massively popular *Computer And Video Games* (affectionately abbreviated to '*CVG*') and *Mean Machines* – is perfectly poised to capitalise on the release of Sega's shiny new Saturn console, having recently acquired the official Sega magazine licence. To prepare for the imminent launch of the machine, EMAP cunningly decided to relaunch its official publication. There were plenty of reasons to be optimistic – the 16-bit Mega Drive had been a massive success in the UK and despite the failure of add-ons such as the Mega CD and 32X, Sega was still seen as the company to beat – in Europe at least. However, as with every transitional period there was an air of trepidation as EMAP's videogame portfolio was shuffled around to accommodate the advent of the new hardware.

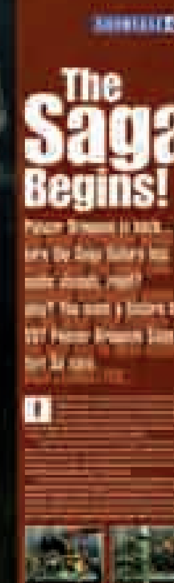
Samantha Robinson (previously known as Sam Hickman before embracing the joys of Holy Matrimony) vividly recalls the chaos that was so prevalent at this time of upheaval and change within the company. "My first day at EMAP was a disaster," she shudders. "I turned up to work on Mega Drive publication *Megatech* only to find that the magazine had closed the day before. I had to sit at my desk all day with the *Megatech* team in various states of panic, while the publisher decided my future. Luckily *Sega Magazine* had just started and needed a production editor." Hardly the ideal start, but having earned her stripes Sam











was therefore perfectly placed to helm the re-styled Sega publication, and was assigned the role of launch editor for *Sega Saturn Magazine* (*SSM* from here in).

Key personnel started to fall into place, including designer Dave Kelsall, who gave the new magazine an effortlessly stylish and mature look. Kelsall had worked on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System* before moving onto *PC Games* – a short-lived attempt by EMAP to break into the home computer gaming market. "*PC Games* closed down and I was asked to dummy up some covers for the new *Sega Saturn Magazine*," he remembers. "Thankfully, Sega liked them and so I joined the old *Sega Magazine* team and set about launching *SSM*."

Launched in time for Christmas 1995, *SSM* started brightly and enjoyed the obvious benefits that having the official Sega licence afforded. "Sega was pretty good as I remember," comments Sam. "There was the usual wrangling over reviewing import games, but it was a really close relationship – we were over at the Sega HQ almost every week." Notable staffers included Radion Automatic (*Mean Machines*), Dan Jevons (*Maximum*/*Gamefan*), Rob Bright (*Mean Machines*) and Tom Guise (*Megatech*/*CVG*), who all contributed to the wonderfully enthusiastic feel *SSM* showcased in those formative years.

Sadly, as the opening shots of the 32-bit conflict were fired it became clear that Sega's luck had run out – it didn't really stand a chance against Sony; a high-price point and uneven collection of early titles handicapped the Saturn. This understandably had a knock-on effect on the fledgling *SSM*. "Even quite early on, there was this impending sense of doom every time the sales figures came in," recalls Sam with a wince. When she decided to take a sabbatical to travel the world, the publication was thrown into disarray. A replacement was needed who had the ability to revitalise the flagging sales figures and continue the sterling work already achieved. That person was Richard Leadbetter.

A writer and editor of incredible talent and foresight, Richard started his career as a fresh-faced teenager at *CVG* before moving on to the bestselling *Mean Machines* and *Mean Machines Sega*. After successfully launching *Sega Magazine*, Leadbetter embarked on what he believed would be the ultimate videogame publication – the epically titled *Maximum*. It was a masterpiece of a magazine, but sadly failed to find the audience it craved (see **Retro Gamer** issue 25 for the full lowdown).

There's a saying in the entertainment industry: "You're only as good as your last project." No matter what triumphs and achievements you may have enjoyed in the past, if your last venture sank without trace then you're treated with disdain and usually shunned. It's an adage that is certainly true in this situation. Once the golden boy, Richard was now treated like a leper within EMAP. "After *Maximum* was shut down after seven issues a lot of questions were asked about my abilities," he explains. "With the rest of the *Maximum* team leaving for the US, I took the brunt of EMAP's wrath to the point where I didn't bother showing up for work for a month." It's clear that he still retains some bitterness even today, and quite rightly so. "The comparatively small loss of £150,000 seemed much more important than the multiple millions I had helped to generate in raw profit from the previous five years of my career," he adds.

Although he was the ideal person to replace Sam and had already contributed several excellent features to *SSM*

"AFTER MAXIMUM SHUT DOWN AFTER SEVEN ISSUES A LOT OF QUESTIONS WERE ASKED ABOUT MY ABILITIES… I TOOK THE BRUNT OF EMAP'S WRATH" RICHARD ON THE NEED TO PROVE HIMSELF AT EMAP





RINGS OF SATURN



SCAN-TASTIC

All the scans you see dotted around this feature were provided by Andy De Wilde, a member of the rather excellent Retromags site (www.retromags.com), who has tirelessly scanned many classic videogame magazines and is currently working on preserving and archiving Richard's ill-fated *Maximum* publication. Along with fellow Retromags contributors, Andy is devoted to restoring and cataloguing these wonderful magazines before they fade away completely. If you feel like reliving your misspent youth, a visit to their site is highly recommended. They boast a selection of publications from all over the world and commendably take time to scan and restore each page digitally, removing creases and marks to make the magazine look as bright and vibrant as it did the day it hit the newsstands. A totally non-profit organisation, Retromags fully deserves your attention and support.

"WE SHOWED SATURN OWNERS WHY CHOOSING THE UNDERDOG MACHINE WAS A GREAT CHOICE... WITH GREAT ART AND SCREENSHOTS" RICHARD ON GETTING READERS ON THEIR SIDE

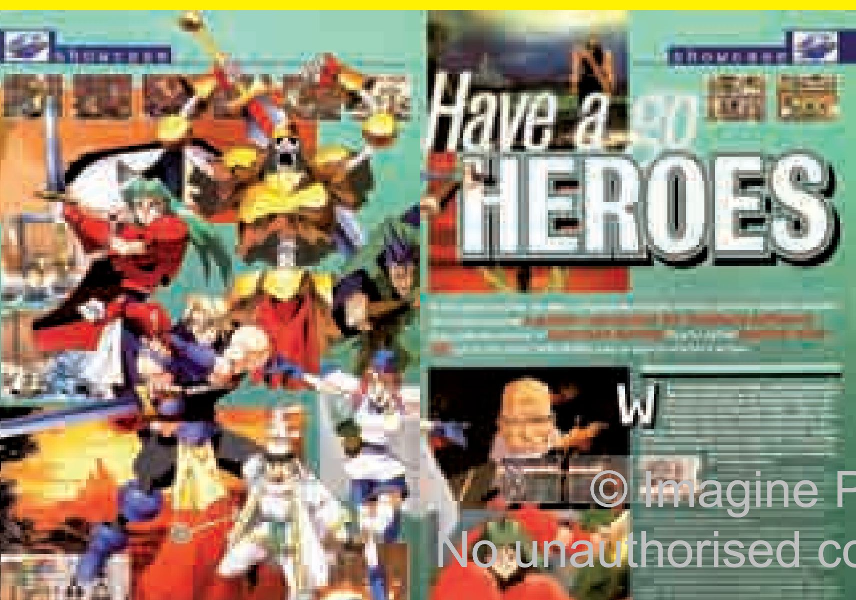
– including some exceptional coverage of *Virtua Fighter 2* in the very first issue – it was clear that EMAP wasn't keen on the idea of him taking over. "Astonishingly, I had to interview to take over from Sam Robinson on *SSM*," he recalls. "To give you some idea of the level of EMAP's post-*Maximum* wrath, publisher Andy McVittie had to get permission from the director just to interview me." Richard was clearly seen as something of a risky proposition, despite his near-fautless track record. However, the interview went ahead and he wasted no time in confidently outlining his blueprint for *SSM*. "I pitched a strong gamer's focus on the key titles, expanding the Sega branding and bringing in the arcade titles to build the excitement long before we saw any Saturn code," he explains. Thankfully, common sense prevailed in the end and Richard was given the job.

Once in place the new editor wisely decided to focus on the things that made the Saturn so attractive and unique. "We hit upon an editorial formula that captured the imagination of Saturn owners," Richard recalls. "We showed them why choosing the underdog machine was a great choice, we combined great art and extremely well-chosen screenshots to show the games at their absolute best." Of course, all the snappy writing and editorial excellence in the world is worthless if you don't have any quality games to cover. "We needed the right games to make this formula work," Richard continues. Fortunately, Sega's 32-bitter was hitting its stride at this point, regardless of its rapidly diminishing market share. Games like *Metal Slug*, *Grandia*, *Shining The Holy Ark* and *The King Of Fighters '96* proved the machine was a viable alternative for hardcore gamers who were disenchanted with Sony's PlayStation. "These titles were instrumental in making the Saturn, and our mag, look great," confirms Richard.

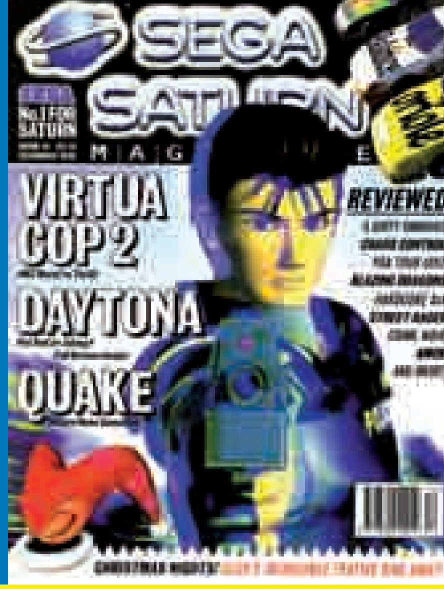
But even with the assistance of some terrific software, the *SSM* team knew that it would be quite a task to inflate the thoroughly depressed readership. Thankfully, the new format seemed to have hit the mark. "Sales rose by over 75 per cent over the course of a year when I took over, making us one of the fastest-growing magazines in the country," explains Richard with a perfectly justified sense of pride. "That raised a few eyebrows when everything and everyone was so PlayStation-orientated."

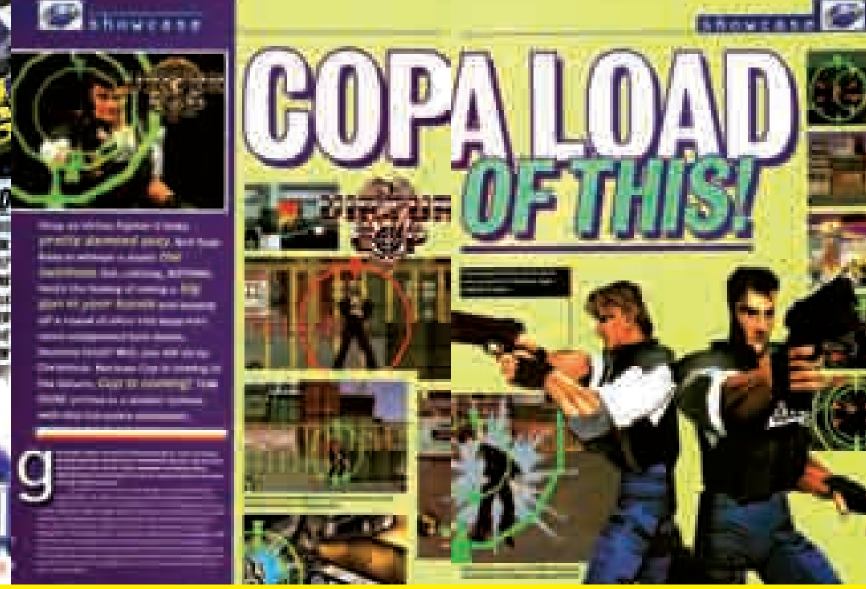
As the Saturn's market share began to shrivel into nothingness, other Sega magazines on the market also started to feel the pinch, including *SSM*'s sister publication *Mean Machines Sega*. "*Mean Machines Sega*'s sales were rapidly declining and the title had to be culled," says Richard. "The staff were effectively moved on to other projects and we inherited Matt Yeo who became my deputy editor. This turned out to be the last piece of the staff jigsaw puzzle and we went on from there with a full team that consistently turned out some great issues."

It was around this time near-legendary staff writers Lee Nutter and Gary Cutlack joined the *SSM* family, the latter's involvement with the magazine being the stuff dreams are made of. A fan plucked from obscurity thanks to his somewhat worrying love of all things Sega, he recalls the era with obvious glee. "I was a reader and fan of *SSM* since









issue one," reminisces Gary. "Rich found the Sega site UK: Resistance (www.ukresistance.co.uk) that I'd started with a friend. He liked it and got me in for an interview when a job came up. He even gave me a few promo discs to take home after – it really was the dream."

As EMAP had discovered with *Nintendo Magazine System* a few years previously, having the official licence meant a unique element of trust had to exist between the magazine and Sega. "They were very 'hands off' with the reviews," recalls Dave. "Both sides knew when something was crap and it got marked accordingly." Being close to Sega brought undeniable perks, but Richard notes that the outside contributors were just as important when it came to getting scoops. "We got a lot of good material from Sega," he explains. "But I'd say that we got just as much good stuff from our correspondent in Japan, Warren Harrod (brother of *Mean Machines* and *Maximum* designer Gary). He probably sourced more Sega-based material for us than Sega itself."

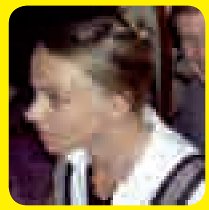
However, the former editor admits that there were times when Sega Europe surpassed expectations when it came to assisting the magazine. "I suggested running the first disc of *Panzer Dragoon Saga* in its entirety as a covermount and I never thought it would happen," says Richard. "But it did, and that was thanks to the internal lobbying at Sega Europe." A truly seismic event in the history of magazine freebies, the *Panzer Dragoon Saga* cover disc wasn't a mere demo – it was the entire first disc of the 4-disc epic, providing several hours of stunning RPG action. "I'd personally rate it as *the* covermount of the era," Richard adds.

Indeed, throughout the life of the magazine, support from Sega was of vital importance to the *SSM* team. "Our relationship was mostly with PR guy Mark Maslowicz," says Sam. "He loved everything Sega, which made life very easy." Dave expands on this, "Mark knew exactly what was going to get us foaming with excitement. There used to be a mass scramble to get hold of early release CDs and goodies that he brought with him on his monthly visits to the office." The oodles of desirable items brought in by Mark were more appealing to some staffers than others, as Sega fanatic Gary remembers, "I just hoped Mark would come in the office and give me some nice Sega badges, games and T-shirts. The first thing I got for free was a *Fighters Megamix* enamel badge. I was genuinely, amazingly excited by this and carried it around with me in my bag for several years after."

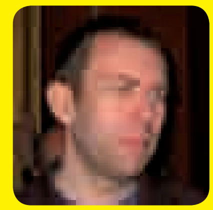
Mark's involvement would prove to be instrumental when it came to promoting the console within the pages of *SSM*,

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

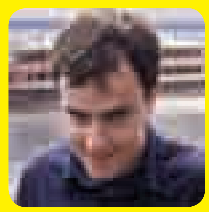

» Richard Leadbetter
Freelance writer and also runs Digital Foundry.


» Sam Robinson
Group editor for BBC Children's magazines.

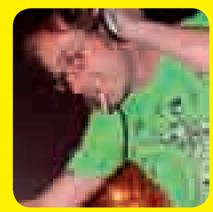

» Tom Guise
Works for adult magazine *Penthouse* in Australia.


» Dave Kelsall
Art director on *Bizarre* magazine.

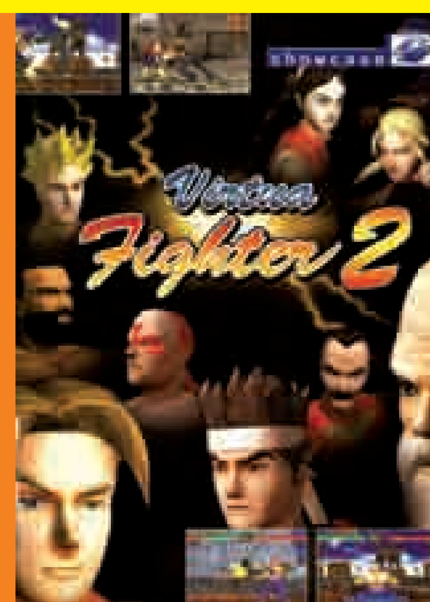

» Matt Yeo
Senior editor of teen magazine *Toxic*.


» Gary Cutlack
Videogame journalist. Still runs UK:Resistance.


» Lee Nutter
Now works as a magazine publisher.


» Radion Automatic
Now working as a freelance writer.





RINGS OF SATURN





"WE ALL LOVED THE SATURN... I GUESS WE KNEW THAT IT WAS DOOMED, BUT WE WERE ALL GOOD FRIENDS AND WE LOVED PUTTING THE MAG TOGETHER" DAVE ON THE TEAM'S MOTIVATIONS

as Richard remembers, "Mark was a gamer who recognised quality. He realised that many upcoming Saturn titles were not commercially viable as PAL releases, but were vital in portraying the Saturn as providing a gaming experience you couldn't get anywhere else." However, when the exuberant Mark was replaced at Sega HQ things went less smoothly. "Mark's replacement didn't quite buy into the import scene," remembers Richard. "I recall a couple of times he told us that Sega was 'doing us a favour' by 'turning a blind eye' to import coverage in an official title."

Over time, UK releases began to slow considerably, so the staff simply gave more space to the games that were available. The upshot of this was unparalleled coverage of truly essential software. "I think the depth we covered the games in was unique," says Gary. "Other mags mentioned *Shining Force III* in passing, but *SSM* did eight pages on it and showed you everything." Matt is keen to point out that it was always the team's intention to give maximum coverage to each title that warranted it. "We spent more time and pages focusing on certain elements of all those titles – not out of editorial desperation, but hopefully a sense of genuine excitement for a console that we felt still had legs," he says.

As Sony's domination of the videogame market continued, the team at *SSM* never let their heads drop. "We knew that the PlayStation was going to be more popular, but our sales were going up, our following was loyal and gave us lots of great feedback," says Richard. "Our aim was always to treat Saturn owners as discerning gamers, as non-sheep who had made a conscious decision to choose Sega's machine over the PlayStation because of the difference in the games." Dave agrees, "We all loved the Saturn and I think a lot of our readers felt the same. There were a lot of amazing titles for the machine and I honestly remember everyone remaining positive. I guess we all knew that the Saturn was doomed, but we were all really good friends and we all loved putting the magazine together."

Gary feels that the predicament the Saturn was in only made the team at *SSM* all the more determined to shout from the rooftops just how great the console actually was. "It meant we had to try harder to make people see the awesome Saturn games they were missing," he says. "I guess we were a bit blinkered and thought that, maybe, if we really showed off the Saturn well that month it could turn things around." Dave is in no doubt about the sheer quality of software available and retains a special place for Sega's 32-bit console in his heart. "There were some really top titles released towards the end of its life," he says. "I would much rather play a Saturn game today than a PlayStation game. I think they have stood the test of time a lot better."

But it wasn't enough. In the West the Saturn slowly crumbled under the steel-toed boot of Sony and *SSM* was forced to devote more and more space to Japanese releases, which increased the status of the publication with hardcore gamers. "We wanted to show that this notion of the Saturn as a true gamer's machine was a worldwide phenomena, and import gaming played an important part in that," says Richard. Gary thinks the decision to give import gaming so much coverage was a matter of duty more than anything, "Knowing that most people would never play *Radiant Silvergun* made it all the more critical that I told them every single thing about it." He remains modest about the work he did in promoting Treasure's classic shooter. "I would like to take personal credit for the game's eBay value thanks to all











those *SSM* features I did about how awesome it was," he chuckles. "If only I'd remembered to steal the disc before the office was ransacked."

In later issues *SSM* looked to the future and gave extensive coverage to the Saturn's successor, the Dreamcast. This managed to keep things ticking over as even Japanese import releases started to dry up, but it was blatantly obvious that it couldn't last – sooner or later the publisher would have to pull the plug. "I think EMAP knew we were struggling, but it was important for the company to have as many official titles in the videogame magazine market as it could," comments Matt. "As is the case with any publishing venture, EMAP had to call time when *SSM* ceased to be commercially viable." Richard is in agreement, "The publisher was very supportive so long as we made money. Make no mistake, everything was about the cash and we were doing well right up until the new releases dried up. Dreamcast coverage alone wasn't enough to sustain sales. What was good about EMAP was the way they gave us a final issue to polish off the magazine and say goodbye."

The magazine left an amazing legacy and having worked with some fantastically talented individuals over the years, Richard is ideally placed to comment on the excellence of those he worked with on *SSM*. "Working with Dave Kelsall was brilliant," he remembers. "He instinctively knew how to handle artwork and screenshots and would work with you to improve the feature. If editorial wasn't good enough, he'd have the balls to complain until it was right. 99 per cent of designers would just work with what they had." Richard also has kind words for all of the other members of staff at SSM, "Getting a team together where everyone is at the top of their game is almost impossible, but I've been really lucky throughout my career in spotting great talent and putting together superb editorial teams."

It may have had the misfortune of covering one of the least successful Sega consoles of all time, but *SSM* has left behind some incredibly happy memories, as well as some rather amusing anecdotes. "Probably the most memorable event for me was working through the night to get the magazine out on time with Tom Guise," remembers Sam with a grin. "Unfortunately we took the terrible decision to drink a few bottles of wine to keep us going, and by about three in the morning I knew we were doomed. Tom had broken the ultra-expensive machine that churns out the pages and I eventually found him comatose on the board room table with this big red wine stain around his mouth. That's when I knew I should look for a new job!" chuckles the *SSM* launch editor.

Gary's favourite recollections are somewhat more humble. "For me the highlight was just seeing games like *Burning Rangers* for the first time," he recalls. "Really the first time – before screenshots, before the internet, before anyone else. The disc would turn up and you'd be playing a new Sonic Team game you'd never seen or even heard of before." It's an era we're unlikely to ever experience again.



DREAM ON

As *SSM* had given excellent coverage to the Dreamcast it seemed to make ideal sense to hand the team the official magazine licence for that console, too. "It seemed perfect," comments Gary. "*SSM* had a decent cult following and once we changed it into *Dreamcast Magazine* we'd have 'up to five billion' readers, if Sega's ads were anything to go by. That's not how it went though." Although Richard's confidence in Sega was at an all-time low by the time the Dreamcast arrived on the scene, he nevertheless helped EMAP put together a dummy publication so the company could pitch for the official licence. "I took the Dreamcast into games shops across Britain and got feedback on the machine," he recalls. "We started to put together a fresh new approach but we also knew that Sega was embarrassed by a hardcore games focus and that this concept wouldn't fly." The magazine was expertly designed by Dave and looked promising, but sadly the official licence was awarded to Dennis Publishing.

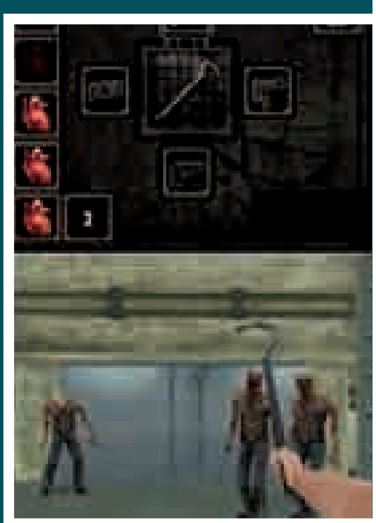




RETRORATED



It's a DS roundup this issue. I'm looking at a neat little game from David Braben's Frontier team, an unusual poke at House Of The Dead and the sequel to the excellent GBA strategy, Glory Days. Meanwhile Darran's been entranced by Zelda: Phantom Hourglass, so much so I had to hide his DS charger to tear him away long enough to write his two-page review



» "Open wide and say 'Ahhh'."

DEAD 'N' FURIOUS

INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** DREAM ON

» **COST:** £29.99

When Darran handed me the box of *Dead 'N' Furious* and I scanned the back to look at what he was asking me to review I almost threw it back at him. For starters – not that I'm a stickler for visuals – the rough grainy images looked like a strange DS beta version of *Resident Evil: Survivor.* Even more worrying was the fact the box didn't even attempt to highlight the game's quirky use of the stylus – which Dream On Studio has built the entire bloody game around. Maybe it gets a mention somewhere in the French, German, Spanish and Italian paragraphs?

Dead 'N' Furious is an on-rails first-person shooter that feels spookily similar to Sega's *House Of The Dead.* And like that gun classic, in the game you're advised to go for head shots for quick kills, shoot at crates to obtain health and unload bullets into hordes of stumbling cadavers wearing police uniforms.

Where this game differs from Sega's gunner is the controls. Using the stylus wand, you poke at the screen to fire, and reload by dragging bullets into your gun chamber. And while that might sound slightly flawed – I mean the whole purpose of a gun game is that you have to actually *aim* at your foes, not press a barrel against a television screen so you can continually pat yourself on the back – the jab-firing adds an addictive immediacy to the gameplay which eventually wins you over.

I do have a massive problem with this game, however. There are only four levels (*Donkey Kong* had four flipping stages and that was released 26 years ago!) and the difficulty curve is all over the place. I breezed through the first level before hitting a two-hour brick wall on Level 2. This stage finds you negotiating an underground sewer system where your character annoyingly sprints into scratching monsters, climbs a ladder where strange biting creatures rain down so fast it's impossible not to lose a life without reloading using a sly finger, takes on an entire section of zombies in a computer room and then has to topple a massive boss that demonstrates Jason Voorhees' levels of stamina. And I had to do all this in one sitting; no checkpoints, no save states, just a one-way ticket to repeat the lengthy process. Simply dead furious longevity, if you ask me.

PRESENTATION 75% Occasionally it looked good, at other times an unfinished jagged mess. Sorry but it's the truth.

AESTHETICS 70% I'm not trying to impress anyone with my bravery here, but the game's not actually that scary.

PLAYABILITY 85% It can be furious at times, but annoyingly addictive to boot.

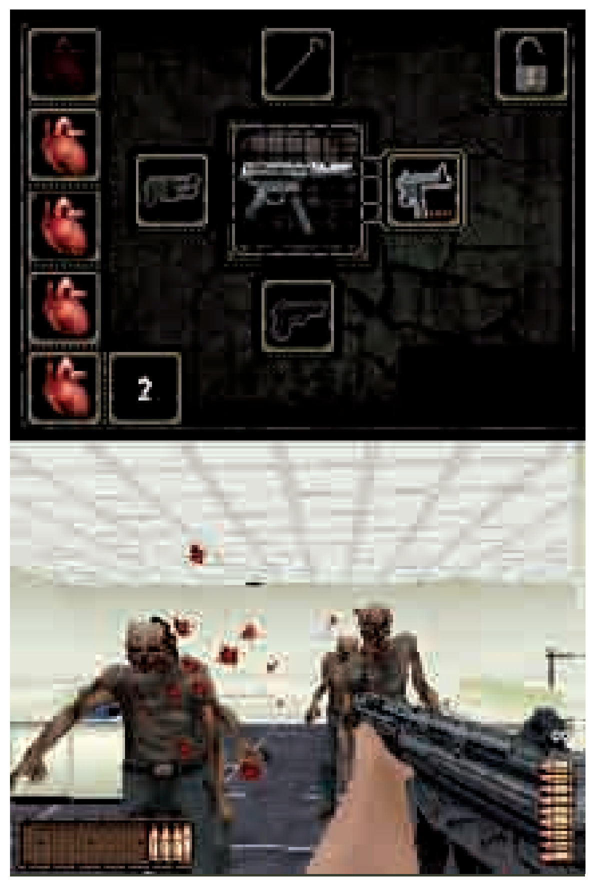
LONGEVITY 60% There are a few differing modes of play on offer, but honestly four stages?

VALUE FOR MONEY 50% It's a bit steep for 30 notes.

OVERALL 65%



» You're ugly, and we're not talking about the zombies.



» "Yippee-ki-yay Fuzzy Monster!"

GLORY DAYS 2

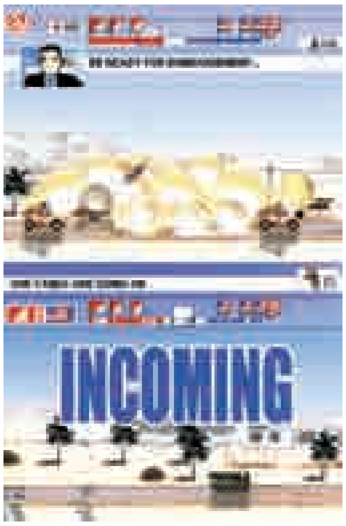
INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** GHOSTLIGHT

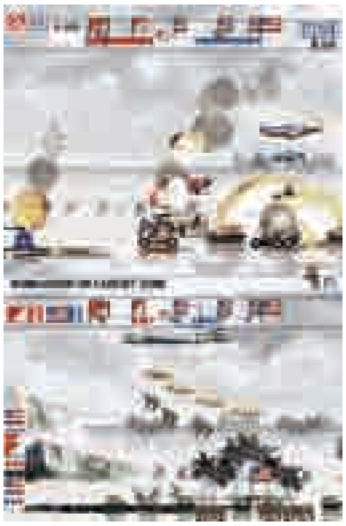
» **COST:** £29.99

Dear mum and dad, it's Tuesday and Ghostlight has lovingly sent a review copy of *Glory Days 2* to Retro Gamer towers. Now, I know you don't play videogames so you'll probably have no idea of what the heck I'm talking about, so I'll elaborate. Basically, I need to lead an army into battle by piloting an awesome array of flying military hardware with peculiar pet names like 'Big Mama', 'Smart Bird' and 'The Big Lion Club'. Piloting these machines, I must take to the skies and support my pathetic ground forces that have the power to blow up at the first sight of enemy tank dust. During 16 daring missions I have to drop to the ground and save prisoners *Choplifter*-style and return them to the safety of camp. I also have to seize enemy bunkers so that my men can use them as a base to regenerate from.

Obviously, the more bunkers I obtain, the faster the scales of victory tilt in my favour. The Army have recently rewarded my bravery by trusting me to fly more planes and letting me deploy ground units to swell my resources. I also have a nifty hub screen, which gives me constant images of my men getting torn apart. Right, must dash, Lieutenant Daz has ordered me to clean the loos with my toothbrush as punishment for forgetting to charge his DS. Please write back soon, your son… Cprl Hunt.



» Um, that can't be good.



» The graphics and weather effects are truly impressive.



PRESENTATION 92% Lovely Nazca-looking graphics.

AESTHETICS 91% War hasn't been this fun since *Cannon Fodder*.

PLAYABILITY 88% Very playable, and surprisingly easy to grasp.

LONGEVITY 89% Some of the missions can be tough little blighters.

VALUE FOR MONEY 88% Has a wonderful pick-up-and-play value.

OVERALL 89%



» *Off the Rails* is perfect if you enjoyed EA's recent version of *Theme Park*.

THRILLVILLE

INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** DC STUDIOS

» **COST:** £29.99

It may look like a hotchpotch of *Theme Park, RollerCoaster Tycoon* and even a smattering of *The Sims* rolled into one game, but David Braben's *Thrillville* takes elements from all of those great games and mashes them into a cool secret-shopper simulator. Yes, you get to take the management reigns of a fully functioning theme park, but on the other side of the coin you also have to actually traipse around the grounds like a customer, soaking in the ambience and breathing in that faint waft of sick emanating from inside the portaloos. You must supervise the day-to-day running and maintain the park by installing new rides, concession stands and by listening to your moaning customers' every pathetic whim. "I'm thirsty", "I'm hungry", "Park needs more staff", "I want a rollercoaster", "I want a toilet." Geez, these jerks are like spoiled brats, they never give up, not even for a second. Luckily though, you are able to unwind by hopping on your rides for free. You can also rename them, to things like 'Jerks Sit Here' and 'Barforama', oh and you can also play slacker with members of your staff through some cool little mini-games.

Despite the miserable customers, *Thrillville* is an enjoyable hybrid of a strategy game that will keep you occupied and entertained with its tasks and mini-games.



» Building rollercoasters is fun.

PRESENTATION 90% The world is bright and inviting.

AESTHETICS 88% You can almost taste the Ferris wheel.

PLAYABILITY 88% The mini-games brilliantly complement the management elements.

LONGEVITY 90% How long is a very long piece of liquorice shoelace.

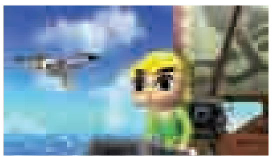
VALUE FOR MONEY 89% Bags of value and bags to do.

OVERALL 88%

» AN EPIC ADVENTURE OF MINIATURE PROPORTIONS

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: PHANTOM HOURGLASS

"YOU'VE GOT THE TOUCH, YOU'VE GOT THE POWER"



- » **SYSTEM:** DS
- » **PRICE:** £29.99
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PLAYERS:** 1 (1-2 ONLINE)



After being somewhat underwhelmed by *The Legend Of Zelda: Twilight Princess* (there we've finally said it), we're pleased to say that Link's first outing on the DS is arguably his greatest adventure since the mighty *Ocarina Of Time*.

Regardless of how you may have felt about *The Wind Waker*'s distinctive visual style, or those endlessly repetitive boat sections that seemingly went on for hours, there was no denying that it was arguably Link's most personal adventure. With his earnest facial expressions and those adorably melancholy puppy-dog eyes, he boasted more characterisation than a dozen other videogame characters and this has been captured almost perfectly for the Nintendo DS.

From the moment that Tetra/Princess Zelda gets captured (you'd have thought by now that she would have started taking some sort of self-defence training), *Phantom Hourglass* never puts a foot wrong and it constantly delights and entertains with its well-structured puzzles and fanciful storyline.

As soon as the engaging and beautifully presented opening is out of the way, you meet up with a smartarse fairy named Ciela and a Jack Sparrow wannabe called Linebeck, who's all mouth and no trousers. Despite his smarminess and lack of backbone, Linebeck is a wonderfully well-rounded character that you'll constantly find yourself rooting for. Make no mistake though, for all the many well-rounded, incidental characters that you encounter on your travels, this is Link's show and *Phantom Hourglass*'s producer, Eiji Aonuma, never lets you forget it.

Sure, he doesn't have quite the same range of astonishing expressions that he sported in *The Wind Waker*, but he is still a wonderfully earnest character and as the (admittedly short) journey continues, you'll soon find yourself falling in love with the green-clothed scamp all over again. And that's the real beauty of *Phantom*



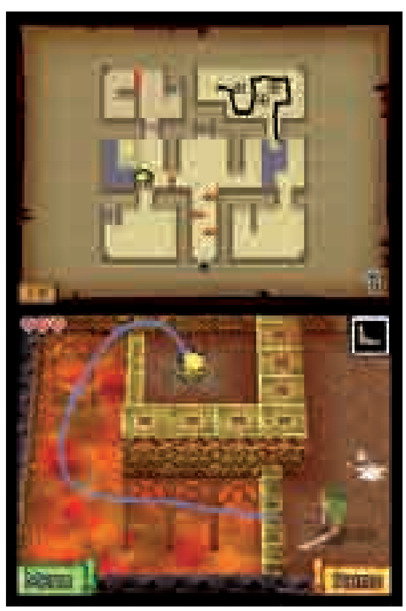
» He might be a coward at heart, but Linebeck is one very entertaining character.



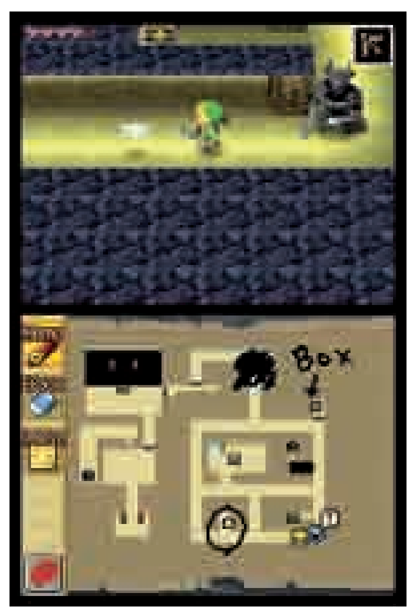
» After the chore of sailing in *The Wind Waker*, we're delighted that *Phantom Hourglass* doesn't suffer from the same problems.



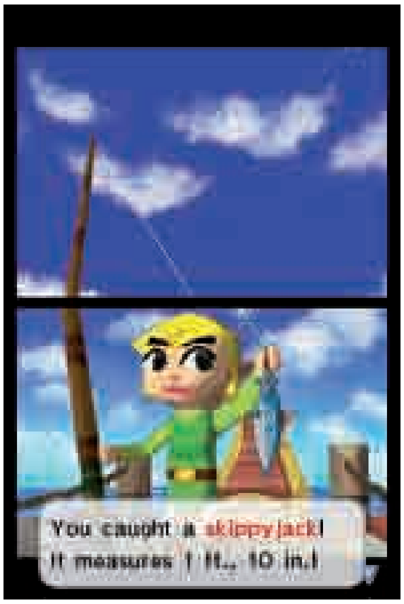
» Fighting is wonderfully intuitive and as easy as swiping at an enemy with the stylus.



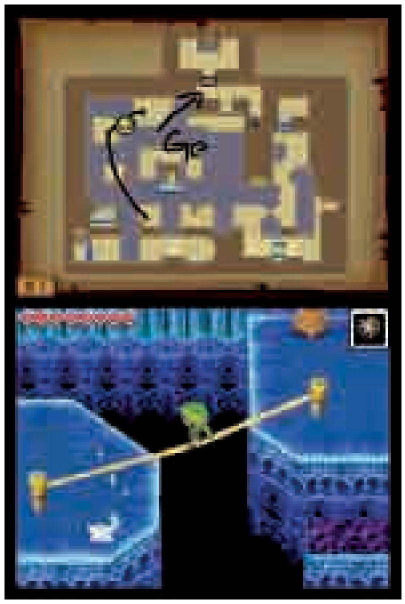
» The DS gives you a level of control with the boomerang that just wasn't possible in earlier *Zelda* titles.



» *Phantom Hourglass*'s map is a thing of wonder and adds a deep layer of immersion to this fantastic game.



» No *Zelda* game would be complete without the ability to fish. You should have seen the one that got away.



» Whatever you do… "Don't fall asleep." Sorry, that's actually from *A Nightmare On Elm Street*.

Hourglass. While it initially appears to be just another *Zelda* game, you very quickly discover that that isn't the case at all. Not by a long shot, in fact.

As well as being pretty much a retread of *Ocarina Of Time*, one of the biggest issues we had with *Twilight Princess* was that Link's abilities felt shoehorned into the Wii, which in itself is hardly surprising when you consider its GameCube origins. *Phantom Hourglass*, on the other hand, has been built from the ground up with the DS's abilities in mind and the end result is a truly stunning piece of software that's head and shoulders above every other release on the DS.

While purists will no doubt be running to the hills because there's no D-pad support (*Phantom Hourglass* is entirely stylus-based) there's no need to worry, as the controls are flawless. Want to gingerly move past that worm so he doesn't detect you and gobble you up? Simple, slowly drag the stylus in the direction you wish to go and Link cautiously heads there. Need to throw a bomb in a certain place to trigger an explosion? Just tap the bomb to pick it up, then tap the screen where you want it to land. Need access to a certain item that's impossibly far from your reach? Then use the boomerang and simply draw the trajectory that you want it to take.

Every single aspect of *Phantom Hourglass* is effortlessly melded together and an hour doesn't go by when you don't chuckle to yourself at some of the ingenious puzzles that have been created.

Combat is handled just as well. Drag the stylus towards an enemy and Link will slash in that direction. Tapping the enemy will result in Link leaping through the air and delivering a powerful overhead attack, while rapidly circling Link with the stylus will cause him to do one of his fabled 360-degree sword spins.

Perhaps the best aspect of *Phantom Hourglass*, however, is the map system it utilises. When the DS first launched, many argued that the second screen would be nothing more than a lazy way to stick a map on screen all the time. While this is the case with *Phantom Hourglass*, it's actually possible to drag it down to the bottom screen for creating valuable notes. It's an utterly wonderful idea that's rarely been used on the machine and works perfectly. If you need to trace a route through a dangerous maze, or have to mark the location of a hidden treasure chest you simply draw in little hints. It adds a further onion-like layer of immersion and proves that Link's adventures weren't getting stale at all; they just needed to be on the right system. Travelling by boat (a real chore in *The Wind Waker*) is also blissfully easy. All you do is trace where you want to go on your map and off you head. You can then search for treasure or destroy monsters by simply tapping the screen.

Nintendo has even managed to put a new spin on the dungeons that have made up a major part of Link's gaming career. While the six main dungeons feature some fiendishly clever little puzzles, the best is the main temple that you'll constantly find yourself returning to. Unlike other *Zelda* games, each completed dungeon allows you to return to the Temple of the Ocean King and advance that little bit deeper. And let's not forget the fabled Phantom Hourglass, which really comes into its own in this huge underground complex.

Where you were free to explore to your heart's content in the smaller dungeons, the complex of the Ocean King is filled with an energy-draining magic that will rob your health and the time from your precious hourglass (you start with ten minutes, but this is increased as you defeat more bosses).

Before we start looking through our dictionary for suitably long and clever words that sum up why we love the *Phantom Hourglass* so much, there are aspects of the game that some may have an issue with. It's very short compared with most *Zelda* adventures and some gamers will no doubt be incensed by the handholding that Nintendo insists on using in every game. The lack of D-pad support is also likely to put many off, while just as many will be annoyed by the repetitiveness of the main dungeon (you're constantly required to complete each floor with your new items).

These are really trivial things, however, and with Christmas just around the corner we can't think of a better gift for your trusted Nintendo DS.

IN SUMMARY

Nintendo has done it again. This may have been its first handheld *Zelda* since the excellent *Link's Awakening*, but you never would have guessed it. *Phantom Hourglass* is full of style, with a charm that gives you the impression that Nintendo has been knocking these out in-house for years (previous handheld *Zeldas* were by Flagship). An utterly superb adventure that no true *Zelda* fan should be without.



OPINION

You've got to hand it to Nintendo, it certainly knows how to make great games. What with this, *Metroid Prime 3* and *Super Mario Galaxy*, I've hardly had a chance to look at anything else recently, and while the main adventure is fairly short it holds plenty of surprises along the way. What impresses most with *Phantom Hourglass* though, is just how well it has been married to the DS. Virtually every aspect of the franchise has been given new life due to the console's unique abilities and it works brilliantly. Regardless of what you've thought of recent *Zeldas*, there can be no denying that this handheld offering is one of the best yet.

Stuart Hunt

THE SCORES

Presentation **92%**

Not only is it utterly charming to look at, but everything you need to do is only a stylus touch away.

Aesthetics **90%**

Gorgeous to look at and you'll instantly recognise some very familiar tunes.

Playability **95%**

The stylus control is ingenious and opens up *Zelda* in a whole new way

Longevity **75%**

While there are a total of seven dungeons, they don't take too long to complete.

Value for Money **90%**

A DS game that actually utilises every aspect of the machine and does so perfectly. Well worth the £30 asking price.

OVERALL SCORE **92%**

HOMEBREW RATED

MONTY STARS IN A BRAND NEW ADVENTURE

MONTY'S CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

Moley Christmas had you in the Christmas spirit, Snowball Sunday had you in the snowball spirit, and Christmas Lemmings had you in the… suicidal spirit? So what's the latest game to enter these spirit-getting denizens? Only a brand new Monty game from Auld games, that's what





» Forget *Super Mario Galaxy*, this is the platformer you need this Christmas.



» Monty Mole is a Santa hat, it really doesn't get any better than this.

Modern-day scrooge Darran Jones has put the pressure on his poor old staff writer Monty Mole. After Sam Stoat pilfers the Christmas edition of **Retro Gamer**, rips all the pages out and hides them in annoying and hard-to-reach places, it's left to Monty to collect them up and get the magazine to the printers before deadline. We know what you're thinking; obviously Monty must succeed otherwise how else would I be holding the December issue in my hands? And that's a very good question – great observational skills. If we're honest, there's no real answer, it's a logical loophole that we simply can't be bothered to fill.

Astute *Your Sinclair* readers will notice that we've pretty much plagiarised the entire layout and even some of the words used in the December issue of *Your Sinclair*, issue 25, page 17. *YS* accompanied its great *Moley Christmas* covermount with an entire page dedicated to the game, which included cut-out-and-keep box art to wrap the cassette around. Well, to mark Monty's return, for another seasonal jaunt, we thought it would be nice if **Retro Gamer** did the same.

We also had a quick word with the game's creators, Scottige and Smila, about the new remake. Here's what they had to say about persuading Monty Mole to come out of retirement and trying to squeeze Darran into a videogame.

Retro Gamer: How did you come up with the idea for the game and why did you choose Monty Mole?

Smila: We all loved Christmas-themed games when we were kids and the free ones that you got with magazines really stick in my memory. So I thought why not do it again, why not bring back that good old Christmas freebie. I brought the idea to Scottige and then approached Darran. I sat for a while fiddling with a few 8-bit-looking characters then it became obvious I needed a recognised 8-bit character – and they don't come any better than good old mole-face.

Scottige: I've been wanting to do a Christmas Monty game for years – a sort of semi-sequel to my *Very Dizzy Christmas* game. I loved *Monty* games and I was very happy with the results of our *Monty On The Run* remake, so I imagined something similar in a Christmas setting.

RG: Darran makes a cameo appearance in the game. How did you manage to squeeze him into a videogame?

Smila: He's got such small grubby features it wasn't too difficult really. A quick rummage through his photo album and a bit of pixel fiddling to release his *evil* horns certainly did the trick.

Scottige: He really looks like that. I was too scared to knock him back.

RG: How did you manage to persuade Monty Mole to come out of retirement?

Smila: It wasn't easy that's for sure, but Scottige managed to catch the little swine. He's been out of action for so long and the beer and pie's have taken their toll on the once super-fit mole. But the promise of a new Christmas hat, a suitcase of ironed bills and the chance to run about in the snow got him back into training and ready for action.

Scottige: After a long chase through my house, down the sewers, a quick stint on a C5 and then on to a boat, I managed to catch up with him. He, like many Hollywood stars, said he wouldn't do a sequel but we all know what they're like. One dump truck of cash later, he was ready for us to shout 'Action'.

RG: Did Monty need much training before he was fit enough to star in a platformer again?

Smila: Eight weeks of training was needed and a complete ban on brown ale, but he's fitter than ever now.

Scottige: A few old videos of his heyday and an exercise bike later he was back on track. We accidentally let him see a level of *Impossamole* in action. That set us back two weeks. He soon came round, though.

RG: Can we expect to see Monty pop up in the New Year? Easter perhaps?

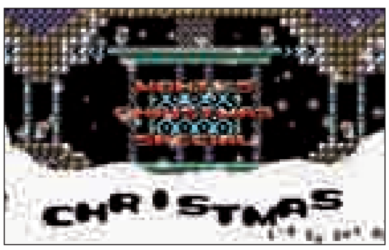
Smila: If his new adventure goes down well it's a definite possibility. What do you reckon Monty?

Monty: Me thinks that veeeeeery nice idea, happy man, yes verry nicey. Easter eggs, yum yum.

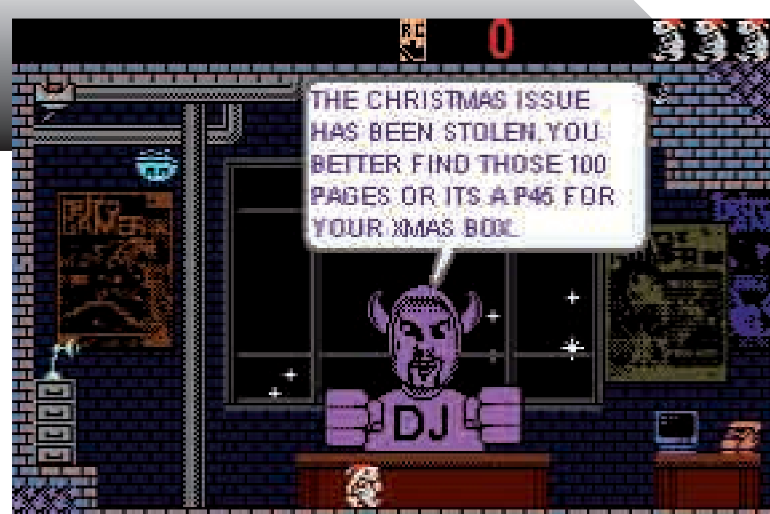
Scottige: I wouldn't be averse to dusting off the engine again. I'd quite like to do a big sprawling game with a light-puzzle element.

RG: What are you working on next?

Smila: I've just finished working on *Wizball* with Graham Goring, and *Exile* with Ovine. Next up for me is a remake of *Stunt Car Racer* with Ovine and *Joe Gunn 2* with Georg Rottensteiner, so I'm very busy.



» The style of loading tapes of old has been captured perfectly.



» Monty wonders whether that staff writer's job was actually worth it.

Scottige: Myself and Geekay (*Potty Pigeon* guy) have been trying to find a decent game to collaborate on. We've narrowed it to a shortlist of two or three. I also want to do a shoot-'em-up of some sort to utilise Multimedia Fusion's hardware acceleration when it appears, which should be before Christmas. I'm constantly looking for ideas, but I always get bored and wander off once I do the challenging bits. I'd love to do another *Magic Knight* game, but after doing the inventories on *Finders Keepers*, I don't think I could bear doing that again times ten!

Download *Monty's Christmas Special* from www.auld-games.co.uk/privatemejig/montychristmas.rar


MOLEY CHRISTMAS

» The original *Moley Christmas* article.



NHLPA HOCKEY 93

IT'S THE MONEY!



- » **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- » **RELEASED:** 1993
- » **GENRE:** SPORTS
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MEGA DRIVE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID



HISTORY

I'm scratching my head deciding which of the myriad of *NHL* titles should feature in this retrospection. I don't pretend to be an expert of the game, or the sport. I couldn't tell you which version is the zenith of the series for the same reasons that I couldn't put a name to more than one professional hockey player. But it's funny how we discover videogames sometimes, especially games that we initially viewed with a certain degree of disdain.

I admit that I had no interest in ever playing this game until I saw the Doug Liman film *Swingers*. There's a great scene in the movie where the main characters are preparing for a night on the town. While they're waiting for their pals to get ready, two friends are shooting the breeze on *NHLPA Hockey 93*.

The scene is interlaced with some witty dialogue stemming from the characters' annoyance over EA removing the fighting from the new game, but allowing you to split a player's head open and spill strawberry slush all over the ice with extra-hard bodychecks. The scene builds up to an argument when one of the guys opts to demonstrate the grisly feature on the other's star player, Wayne Gretzky, during an all important play-off.

A few months later, I spotted a second-hand copy of the game in my local videogame exchange shop and decided to hit the ice, so to speak. I was surprised at how well the game played, how fluid and chaotic the action was and how brutal the sport seemed, and I was immediately hooked on the multiplayer spats. I think it was the game that I'd ferry most when I was going round to a mate's house, and the one they'd continually ask me to borrow.

I can't honestly remember why I didn't follow the game's series for longer than I did. I guess I could put it down to never actually having an interest in the sport. I wasn't really too fussed about playing the sport using an ancient hockey team who had long retired from the sport to become pundits and appear in impotence commercials… probably.


CHI 1
PIT 0
1ST 8:01
CHI 1
PIT 0
Icing
1ST 7:48
CHI 1
PIT 0
1ST 7:47
CHI 1
PIT 0
CHI 1
PIT 0
1ST 6:48
CHI 1
PIT 0
1ST 6:48
CHI 1
PIT 0
1ST 6:48
CHI 1
PIT 0
CHI 1
PIT 0
1ST 5:37
CHI 1
PIT 0
1ST 5:19
CHI 1
PIT 0
1ST 5:12
CHI 1
PIT 0
CHI 1
PIT 0
1ST 4:19
CHI 1
PIT 0
1ST 4:11
CHI 1
PIT 0
1ST 4:07
CHI 1
PIT 0
CHI 1
PIT 0
1ST 3:23
PIT 0
PIT 0
CHI 0
PIT 0

BARGAIN HUNT

HUNT DOWN BARGAINS OR JUST DRINK UP THE LOVELINESS OF ALL THIS RETRO GOODNESS. FEAST YOUR EYES ON SIX PAGES OF THE VERY BEST THAT RETRO GAMING HAS TO OFFER…

Collecting retro games can be great fun, but you need to have a rough idea how much it's going to cost you. So here for your buying pleasure is Retro Gamer's buyer's guide. Where possible we have endeavoured to list the earliest international launch date, be it Asia, America or Europe. Prices were compiled from a variety of sources, including eBay, Japanese auctions, car-boot sales, traders and general consensus. Foreign items will often be cheaper in their local country, so regional differences should be considered. Also, bear in mind that online items will often be cheaper than you will find in specialist stores. If you see an item selling for far less, good for you! We aim to help with finding those bargains, but if you see an item sold for much higher make sure you really want to purchase it. Prices fluctuate and the market sways, so there can never be a concrete listing. Bear in mind that something is worth as much as someone else is willing to pay. No one is perfect though, and we will openly admit that with over a hundred different systems to list, mistakes can happen. If you spot a glaring error in our listings, please drop us an email at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk and let us know about it.

RETRO AUCTION WATCH

Retro Gamer will be sifting through countless pages of eBay and reporting on any items of interest (hardware and software) that have caught our eye. As you may have noticed, we've changed the theme recently and are looking at specific categories. This month we look at a selection of *Dizzy* releases

DIZZY PANIC
Commodore 64
Normally sells for **25p**
Ended at **£3.02**



TREASURE ISLAND DIZZY
Amiga
Normally sells for **£3**
Ended at **£7.01**



3DO



3DO GOLDSTAR
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£45+ ($83 - $111)**

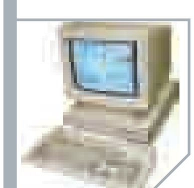


PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 - £60 ($74 - $111)**



PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
While 3DO systems had much potential, there wasn't enough software support and it eventually stopped production. There were still some great games released.
- STAR CONTROL 2
- RETURN FIRE
- CRASH AND BURN

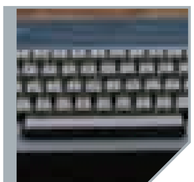
ACORN



ARCHIMEDES
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) with games**
Early RISC-based home computer, quite powerful at the time.



ATOM
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**
Extremely old home computer by Acorn that's now hard to find.



ACORN ELECTRON
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Budget version of the BBC home computer (below).

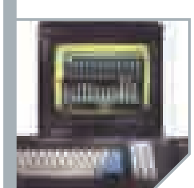


BBC MICRO
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
A classic British home computer, and quite popular. Affectionately known as 'the Beeb'.
- EXILE
- ELITE
- WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

AMSTRAD



CPC 464
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
Early classic 8-bit home computer from Amstrad, designed to compete against the C64 and ZX Spectrum. This early model has a built-in cassette tape deck. Beware the models that come with a green screen monitor.



CPC 664
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90+ ($165+)**
Like the 464, except with a floppy disk drive. A short-lived model that was soon replaced by the superior 6128.



CPC 6128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25+ ($46+)**
Improved model which doubled the RAM of previous iterations. Later 'Plus' models came with a cartridge port.
- GET DEXTER
- XOR
- SORCERY +



GX4000
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
Console version of the CPC Plus range, came with joypads. Limited range of games.
- BURNIN' RUBBER
- PANG
- SWITCHBLADE

APPLE



APPLE II
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+) with games**
Like many early computers the Apple II was hand-built and sold to enthusiasts.
- KARATEKA
- ULTIMA IV
- LODE RUNNER

ATARI



400/800/600XL/XE
» YEAR **1979**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Series of old 8-bit Atari home computers.
- DROP ZONE
- THRUST
- ZYBEX



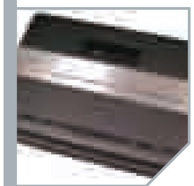
2600 (VCS)
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Earliest console by Atari. Various models, many with the classic wood panelling effect. Many UK gamers had their first taste of videogames on this.
- PITFALL
- ADVENTURE
- COSMIC ARK

RARITY GUIDE

●●●●● ROCKING HORSE SHIT
●●●● HEN'S TEETH
●●● LUCKY FIND
●● EBAY REGULAR
● CAR-BOOT SALE BARGAIN



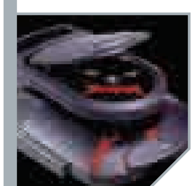
5200
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY ●●●●
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Unpopular successor to the 2600, regarded as an Atari 400 without a keyboard.
- RESCUE ON FRACTALUS
- DIG DUG
- ZAXXON



7800
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY ●●
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Handily, Atari made the 7800 backwards compatible with the ever popular 2600.
- KARATEKA
- CHOPLIFTER
- WINTER GAMES



JAGUAR
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY ●
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Failed attempt to beat the PlayStation and Saturn in the console race. Few decent games. But it does have Jeff Minter's *Tempest*!
- TEMPEST 2000
- ALIEN VS PREDATOR
- BATTLESPHERE (RARE AND EXPENSIVE!)



JAGUAR CD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY ●●●●
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**
Rare and overpriced CD add-on for the Jaguar. Very few games, but it does look very much like a toilet seat!
- BATTLEMORPH CD
- HIGHLANDER CD
- TEMPEST 2000 MUSIC CD

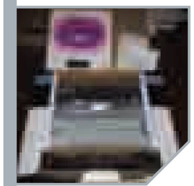


LYNX I/II (2ND IS SMALLER)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY ●●
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
Powerful handheld from Atari that failed due to poor marketing and battery life.
- BLUE LIGHTNING
- CALIFORNIA GAMES
- DIRTY LARRY RENEGADE COP



ST
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY ●
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) depending on model**
This is an Atari home computer and a big rival to the Amiga. There are many different models available, of various specifications.
- DUNGEON MASTER
- POPULOUS
- DAMOCLES

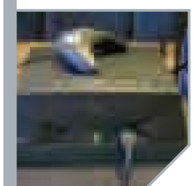
BANDAI



GUNDAM RX-78 COMPUTER
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY ●●●●●
» PRICE **£75+ ($138+) prices fluctuate wildly**
Ultra-rare, early Japanese games computer by Bandai. Aimed at both gamers and anime fans. Expect to pay a much higher price for a machine that's in mint condition.



PLAYDIA
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY ●●●●●
» PRICE **£90 ($166) and upwards according to eBay**
Bizarre Japan-only console, apparently made for kids.
- SAILOR MOON
- ULTRAMAN
- DRAGON BALL Z



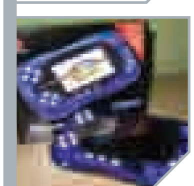
PIPPIN (ATMARK)
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY ●●●●●
» PRICE **Approx £500+ ($921+)**
A strange hybrid system from Bandai and Apple. Very expensive and with very few games available. Its high price means that it's normally only sought after by collectors.
- RACING DAYS
- DRAGON BALL Z
- GUNDAM TACTICS



WONDERSWAN (B/W)
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY ●●
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



WONDERSWAN COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY ●●
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**



WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL
» YEAR **2000**
» RARITY ●●
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**
Handheld system by Bandai, fairly popular. Can now be bought very cheaply, especially in Japan. Be sure to buy the SwanCrystal, which is basically an improved 'Color' model. Both colourised models can run B/W WS games.
- GUNPEY EX
- SWAN COLOSSEUM
- JUDGEMENT SILVERSWORD

COMMODORE



AMIGA 500/600/1200
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY ●
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) more with games, depending on model**
Classic and incredibly popular 16-bit home computer by Commodore that was designed to compete against the Atari ST range. Vast array of different models with differing specs. The Amiga 500 (with a RAM upgrade) is a particular favourite with many gamers.
- SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE
- LEMMINGS
- SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER



C16/PLUS 4
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY ●●●
» PRICE **£15+ ($28+)**
The less well-known sibling of the C64, but without the compatibility of its peers.
- TUTTI FRUTTI
- MONTY ON THE RUN
- KIKSTART



C64
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY ●
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
One of the bestselling 8-bit home computers of all time. Competed against the Spectrum and Amstrad home computers. Featured the wonderful SID sound chip that was put to amazing use by the likes of Ben Daglish and Rob Hubbard.
- WIZBALL
- MAYHEM IN MONSTERLAND
- PARADROID



C64 GS (GAMES SYSTEM)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY ●●●●
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Commodore's cartridge-based machine that tried to take on both Nintendo and Sega. Sadly failed due to a lack of support from most publishers.
- PANG
- NAVY SEALS
- BATTLE COMMAND

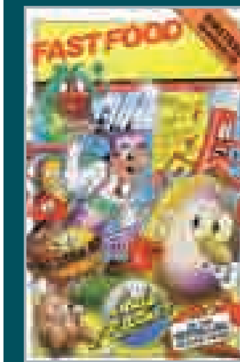


C128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY ●●●
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Three machines (CPM, C64 and C128) in one box. Specialised software is relatively small in number.

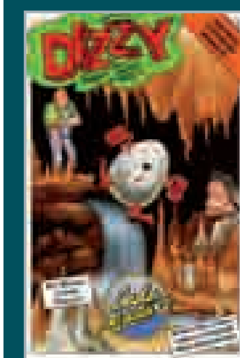


CDTV
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY ●●●●
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Commodore aimed for the 'every home should have one' market and missed by a country

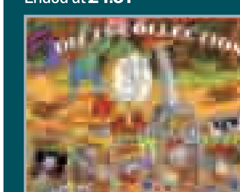
FAST FOOD
Amstrad
Normally sells for **25p**
Ended at **No sale**



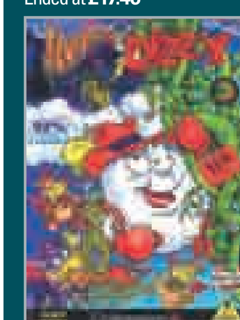
DIZZY
Amstrad
Normally sells for **25p**
Ended at **£4.56**



DIZZY COLLECTION
Spectrum
Normally sells for **£10**
Ended at **£4.81**



FANTASTIC DIZZY
Mega Drive
Normally sells for **£5**
Ended at **£17.46**



mile. A curious mixture of games and educational material.



CD32
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**
CD-based console that followed on from the experimental CDTV. Sometimes described as a consolised Amiga 1200 with CD drive. Despite featuring some extremely impressive games, the majority failed to improve on their 500 and 1200 counterparts.
- EXILE
- SIMON THE SORCERER
- ALIEN BREED 3D



VIC-20
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) based on condition/extras**
The computer that established the Commodore brand.
- HELLGATE
- SERPENTINE
- SUPER SMASH

FUJITSU



FUJITSU FM COMPUTERS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+)**
Early Nineties home computers by Fujitsu.



FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200+ ($368+)**
A legendary console, which contains both a CD and disk drive. Based on Fujitsu's old FM Towns computers, and mostly backwards compatible with the majority of games. Very expensive (especially if you find a machine in mint condition), but with a lot of chic!
- ZAK MC KRAKEN
- TATSUJIN OU
- SCAVENGER 4

MISCELLANEOUS



BALLY ASTROCADE
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Early videogame system that used interchangeable cartridges, developed by the Bally games division at Midway Games.
- GATE ESCAPE
- ICBM ATTACK
- TREASURE COVE



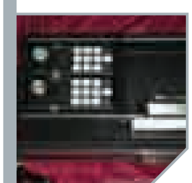
BARCODE BATTLER
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($18)**
Handheld LCD game, where you must swipe barcoded cards (or barcodes taken from soup packets!) to gather stats, and then battle against someone else who swiped barcodes. We're not making this up…
- SUEDE - SUEDE
- OASIS - DEFINATELY MAYBE
- BLUR - PARK LIFE



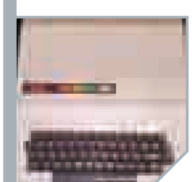
CASIO LOOPY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**
More insanity from the Land of the Rising Sun. This is a console designed especially for female gamers and it even allows stickers to be printed out… Casio had hoped it would do better than its PV-1000 console released in 1983.



FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F
» YEAR **1976**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) from the USA**
The first commercially released console that used programmable cartridges. A real piece of history. Despite this, it's surprisingly cheap to purchase (although importing from the US may cost a fair amount).



COLECOVISION
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) standalone**
Coleco's third-generation videogame system. Quite a few decent games, and considering its age it's a fairly powerful machine. Many of its arcade conversions were considered superior to the other systems on the market.
- CONGO BONGO
- SMURPH RESCUE
- CABBAGE PATCH KIDS



DRAGON 32/64
» YEAR **1982/3**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15) very cheap on eBay**
Early British home computer that tried to cash in on the early Eighties boom. Short-lived, though quite popular. The 64 model was released roughly a year after the 32.
- GRID RUNNER
- DEVIL ASSAULT
- CAVE FIGHTER



ARCADIA 2001
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Failed console by Emerson that had numerous different clones released, as well.
- FUNKY FISH
- JUNGLER
- ROBOT KILLER



EPOCH CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Obscure early Japanese console, which in 1983 had a budget 'Junior' model released.



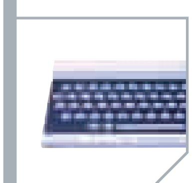
EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Epoch's successor to the Cassette Vision, it was also marketed in Europe under the Yeno label. Apparently it only had around 30 games released for it.



INTELLIVISION
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40+ ($74+) depending on extras**
Developed by Mattel, the system was revolutionary. It was the first console to be technically 16-bit, go online (to download games), and it featured voice synthesis. Today it still has a strong retro following.
- FROG BOG
- ARMOR BATTLE
- LOCK 'N' CHASE



ODYSSEY
» YEAR **1972**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
The original home videogame console, even before Atari got in on the act. Created by Ralph Baer, this is the ultimate piece of gaming history. Fortunately, it can be purchased relatively cheaply.



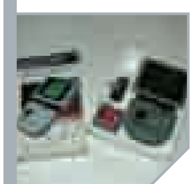
ORIC-1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
The Oric-1 was a highly underrated 8-bit bit home computer created by Oric Products International. Despite having many games that were arguably superior to those on the Spectrum it was sadly unable to compete with the rival machine's high sales.
- XENON1
- INSECT INSANITY
- RAT SPLAT



PLAYSTATION
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on condition/model**
After manufacturing MSX machines, Sony re-entered the games hardware market and this time took it over. There are countless excellent PS games. It was later re-released as the PSone, which is more expensive but looks much nicer.
- CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT
- FINAL FANTASY VII
- RIDGE RACER



SAM COUPÉ
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 - £200 ($92 - $368) allegedly for a mint system**
Originally developed by Miles Gordon Technology in Swansea, the Sam Coupé was a unique 8-bit British home computer that didn't fare very well. It could even emulate the 48K Speccy to a degree.
- DEFENDERS OF THE EARTH
- ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS
- PRINCE OF PERSIA



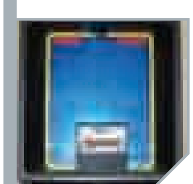
SUPERVISION
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
Marketed by several different companies, this was essentially a cut-price competitor to the monochrome Game Boy. Unsurprisingly, it was not manufactured for very long and is now hard to find.



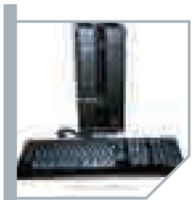
TIGER ELEC. GAME.COM
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
Attempt by Tiger Electronics to compete against the Game Boy.
- RESIDENT EVIL 2
- SONIC JAM
- DUKE NUKEM 3D



TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)
» YEAR **1983/4**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Series of old computers by Tomy.



VECTREX (MB/GCE)
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
The only home system ever to come with a vector display, enabling true vector graphics.
- SPACE WAR
- SPINBALL
- HYPERCHASE



X68000
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90+ ($166+)**
Home computer by Sharp, released only in Japan. Famous for its arcade ports.
- CASTLEVANIA CHRONICLES
- STREET FIGHTER 2
- FINAL FIGHT

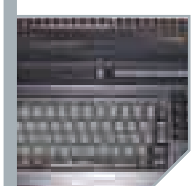
MSX



MSX 1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
An early attempt to create a standard gaming platform, fairly common in the UK.
- PENGUIN ADVENTURE
- KNIGHTMARE
- THE GOONIES



MSX 2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Updated and more powerful version of the MSX, very popular in Holland and Brazil where even today some excellent home-brew games are developed.
- METAL GEAR 2
- ALESTE 2
- VAMPIRE KILLER

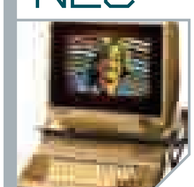


MSX 2+
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Another hardware update that proved to be very popular in Holland.
- SPACE MANBOW
- GOLVELLIUS 2
- F1 SPIRIT 3D SPECIAL



MSX TURBO R
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
A final and not very popular hardware update, that was virtually exclusive to Japan.
- FRAY
- PRINCESS MAKER
- ILLUSION CITY

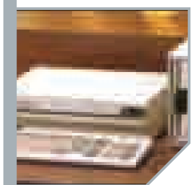
NEC



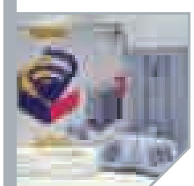
PC-6### (ALSO MK II)
» YEAR **1984 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) depending on model**
Quite old 6000 series of home computers by NEC, with a lot of cool Japanese games for it. Released in the US as the NEC Trek. Be careful of shipping prices.



PC-8801
» YEAR **1981 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) cheap on Yahoo! Japan**
Old computer series by NEC, with several different models over the years. Has a massive roster of cool games, including the original *Silpheed*. While very cheap to buy online from Japan, shipping is expensive.



PC-9801
» YEAR **1983 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) cheap on Yahoo! Japan**
Another home computer series by NEC, again with many great games. Laptop versions also exist. Most games by Falcom are worth watching out for.



PCFX
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) prices can fluctuate**
32-bit tower console by NEC, resembles a PC. Released in Japan only, had software support until 1998. Only a few action titles. Apparently, it also had quite a bit of hentai on it.
- LAST IMPERIAL PRINCE
- CHOUJIN HEIKI ZEROIGAR (SHMUP)
- ZENKI FX (FIGHTER)



PC-ENGINE
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£55 ($101)**
Classic piece of Japanese hardware from NEC which features many excellent arcade ports and a few exclusives. The CoreGrafx system is basically a PC-Engine with AV output.



PC-ENGINE GT
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70+ ($129+)**
Portable handheld version of the Japanese PC-Engine that played all Japanese Hu-Cards.



TURBO GRAFX-16
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
American version of the PC-Engine. It has territory lockout, so the two systems' Hu-Cards are not compatible.



TURBO EXPRESS
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) massive fluctuations**
Portable handheld version of the American Turbo Grafx-16.
- BONK/PC KID SERIES
- PC KID
- OUTRUN



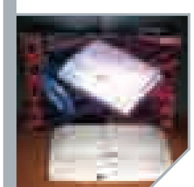
SUPER GRAFX
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147) prices can fluctuate**
Meant to be the successor to the original PC-Engine, but sadly failed due to lack of games. It is backwards compatible, but only had six games specifically released for it.
- ALDYNES
- DARIUS PLUS
- GHOULS AND GHOSTS



PC-E CD-ROM/ TURBO GRAFX CD
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
CD-ROM add-on for the PC-E and TG16, released in 1988 and 1989. It has no region lockout.



PCE DUO/TURBO DUO
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£120 ($221)**
System that combines the PC-E/TG16 with its CD add-on. Released in both Japan and America in 1991 and 1992. The CD games still have no region lockout.

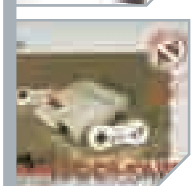


DUO-R
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Stripped-down white version of the PC-E Duo, without headphone port. Later in 1994 a Duo-RX version was released, slightly blue in colour and came with a six-button control pad.
- DRACULA X
- SHUBIBINMAN 3
- LORDS OF THUNDER

NINTENDO



FAMICOM
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£60 ($111)**
Nintendo's first foray into the home console market, with over 1,000 games to choose from!



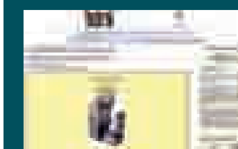
FAMICOM AV
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
A cheaper remodelled version of the Famicom, now with AV output.



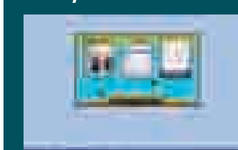
FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**
Nintendo's attempt to bring cheap rewritable disk-based gaming to the masses. Be warned, the drive belts break very easily.

RETRO GAMING SITES

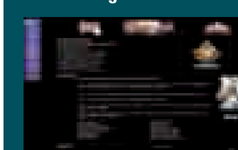
KILLER LIST OF VIDEOGAMES
If you're looking for an exhaustive list of arcade titles, then look no further than the amazingly comprehensive KLOV. There's a stupid amount of screenshots to drool over, plenty of interesting facts and all the stats you could ever wish for. An essential website.
www.klov.com



YOLK FOLK.COM
If you liked this month's article on *Treasure Island Dizzy* then why not head over to this great *Dizzy* resource site? As well as featuring every single game in the series there are also some superb fan games and a selection of interviews. *Dizzy* fans will be in seventh heaven.
www.yolkfolk.com

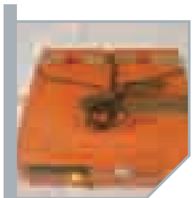


NEO-GEO.COM
Yes, we've mentioned this site numerous times before, but it's just so good. There's a wealth of informative collectors on the forums, some very good reviews and a price guide that many will find essential. The perfect site to visit if you're new to the world of SNK.
www.neo-geo.com



THE VIDEOGAME ATLAS
If you've found yourself stuck in a game, with no way to move on, then you may want to check out this site. It has loads of maps that cover a range of computers and consoles and should prove a godsend for those not wanting to resort to cheat sites like gamefaqs.com.
www.vgmaps.com





SHARP FAMICOM TWIN
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Combined Famicom and Disk System, by Sharp.
- OTOCKY
- NAZO NO MURASAMEJOU
- PATLABOR



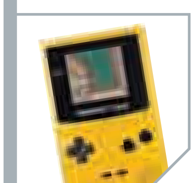
GAME&WATCH
» YEAR **1980-1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£1+ ($2+)**
Series of handheld LCD games that were created by the legendary Gunpei Yokoi.



GAME BOY B/W
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($9)**
Nintendo's original handheld portable, with interchangeable cartridges. Despite its age, and monochrome display, there are many excellent classic GB games.



GAME BOY POCKET
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15)**
A smaller and more compact Game Boy, with improved screen. A Japanese version with built-in light was released and sells for a much higher price.
- SUPER MARIO LAND
- TETRIS
- POKÉMON



GAME BOY COLOR
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£12 ($22)**
Colour-based version of the classic Game Boy. Backwards compatible, but it also has several exclusive games that were rather special.
- METAL GEAR SOLID: GHOST BABEL
- RESIDENT EVIL GAIDEN
- HARVEST MOON 3



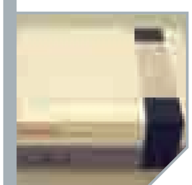
GAME BOY ADVANCE
» YEAR **2001**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**



N64
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Nintendo's last cartridge-based console, competitor to the PlayStation and Saturn. Has several highly sought-after classics. Some games (like *Donkey Kong*) require the RAM expansion pack and wouldn't run without it.
- SUPER MARIO 64
- PILOTWINGS 64
- BLAST CORPS



N64 DD
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
Another attempt by Nintendo to incorporate disc media with one of its cartridge-based consoles. Expensive and very few games were released.
- F-ZERO EXPANSION KIT
- MARIO ARTIST SERIES
- DOSHIN THE GIANT



NES (TOASTER)
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
The Western version of the Famicom, popular the world over. Plenty of great Nintendo classics to choose from, and it's very cheap too.



NES (DOG BONE)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**
Remodelled and improved version of the traditional NES. Region lockout was also removed, meaning all 72-pin based NES games work.
- METROID
- THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
- SUPER MARIO BROS. 3



SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Nintendo's successor to the NES, and one of the company's most popular machines. A retro staple with a fantastic selection of games.



SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JAPAN)
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
Cheaper and redesigned SNES.
- SUPER METROID
- SECRET OF MANA
- SUPER MARIO WORLD



VIRTUAL BOY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Nintendo's failed attempt at a pseudo Virtual Reality games system. Quite a novelty as there is nothing else like it. Be warned though, as many gamers have complained that the machine gives them headaches – never a good thing.
- INSMOUSE NO YAKATA (HP LOVECRAFT INSPIRED FPS)
- WARIO LAND
- RED ALARM

PHILIPS



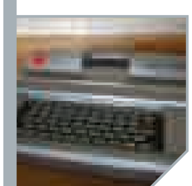
CD-I 205/210/220
» YEAR **from 1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Unique system by Philips. The 200 series consists of front-loading systems, with each one having slightly different specifications.



CD-I 450/500
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) more with DVC**
This is the consolised version of previous models, with the latter 500 series featuring an integrated DVC.
- BURN CYCLE
- HOTEL MARIO



VIDEOPAC G7000
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Popular across the world (especially Brazil and Holland) and known also as the 'Odyssey 2'.



VIDEOPAC G7400
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
A successor to the G7000 that was backwards compatible.
- QUEST FOR RINGS
- PICKAXE PETE
- MUNCHKIN

SEGA



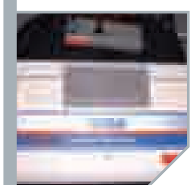
32X
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) (with leads)**
Failed Mega Drive add-on, designed to enhance its capabilities.
- KNUCKLES CHAOTIX
- KOLIBRI
- DARXIDE



DREAMCAST
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46) depending on extras**
Sega's final hardware release. No gamer should be without it. Amazing official roster of games, plus it can emulate older systems.
- SHENMUE
- SKIES OF ARCADIA
- REZ



GAME GEAR
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28) more with extras**
Handheld by Sega, designed to compete against the Game Boy. Low battery life, but effectively a portable Master System. With add-on tuner, could also be used as a TV (as shown here).
- SHINOBI 2
- COLUMNS
- TV TUNER



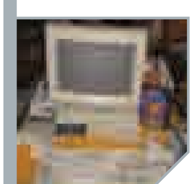
SG-1000 (PLUS THE MARK II AND III)
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20-£50 ($37 - $$92)**
Sega's first console, and a piece of history. The Mark III model would later be redesigned to become the Master System. Like the Japanese Famicom, it's much nicer than the UK version.



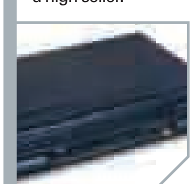
SC-3000
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £50 ($92)**
Computer equivalent of the SG-1000, also by Sega. Was popular in Australia and other ex-colonies. Mutually compatible with the SG-1000 as well.



MASTER SYSTEM I/II
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) with leads etc**
Popular Sega 8-bit console, which competed against the NES. Adapted from previous systems.
- PHANTASY STAR
- WONDER BOY 3: DRAGON'S TRAP
- CALIFORNIA GAMES



AMSTRAD MEGA PC
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) according to eBay**
A strange hybrid between an Amstrad PC and a Mega Drive. A nice collectable oddity, though according to past eBay auctions, not a high seller.



TERADRIVE
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £100 ($184)**
Another Mega Drive computer hybrid. Released earlier than the Amstrad

hybrid, these systems have no connection. Due to being exclusive to Japan, they are seldom seen in the wild. Likely to be very expensive if you are able to find one.



MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II
» YEAR **1989+**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on model**
The big daddy, Sega's most successful console and a retro classic.

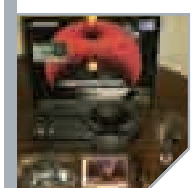


GENESIS 3
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Developed by Majesco. This third, cut-down model is rarer and has some compatibility issues. USA only.



NOMAD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Handheld Mega Drive. Pricey, low battery life and some compatibility problems.

- RANGER-X
- THUNDER FORCE IV
- COMIX ZONE



MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/ CDX/X'EYE
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+) depending on system**
A series of different hybrid MD and MCD systems, released in the three main territories.



MEGA CD (SCD) I/II
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+) depending on system**
Sega's CD add-on for the Mega Drive. Despite heavy criticism, has many excellent games.

- POPFUL MAIL
- SNATCHER
- SONIC CD



PICO
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) more with games**
Toy computer released for young children. The games come in nice storybook-style boxes.

- SONIC'S GAMEWORLD
- ECCO JR AND THE GREAT OCEAN HUNT
- THE LION KING: ADVENTURES AT PRIDE ROCK



SATURN
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Sega's competition against the PlayStation and N64. A real 2D powerhouse that, despite an amazing catalogue of games, never really took off.

- BURNING RANGERS
- RADIANT SILVERGUN
- PANZER DRAGOON SAGA

SINCLAIR

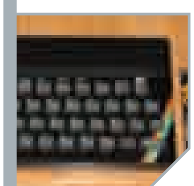


ZX-80
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200 ($368) apparently if boxed and mint**
Very early British home computer from Sinclair. Low capability meant limited gaming possibilities. Now extremely hard to get hold of.



ZX-81
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) if mint**
Improved home computer from Sinclair, with black and white ASCII graphics. Not as hard to source as a ZX-80, but still commands a respectable price.

- 3D MONSTER MAZE
- MAZOGS
- SABOTAGE



ZX SPECTRUM 48K
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



ZX SPECTRUM 128K
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**



ZX SPECTRUM+
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**



ZX SPECTRUM +2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**



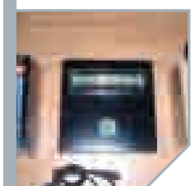
ZX SPECTRUM +3
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
The British classic loved by many. A vast improvement over previous Sinclair computers, the Spectrum was normally compared against the C64 and Amstrad home computers, which in turn caused many playground arguments over who had the better machine.

- HEAD OVER HEELS
- 3D DEATHCHASE
- SKOOL DAZE

SNK



NEO-GEO AES
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
High-powered home system by SNK. Features many high-quality arcade games. Sadly, many titles are now ridiculously expensive to purchase.



NEO-GEO MVS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) multi-slot systems cost more**
High-powered arcade system by SNK, which many people prefer over the home-based AES due to lower pricing of games. (The majority of Neo-Geo titles appeared on both systems, or alternatively can be converted.)

- METAL SLUG 3
- KING OF FIGHTERS 96
- BLAZING STAR

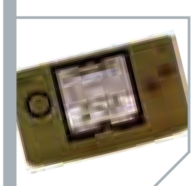


NEO-GEO CD
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184) varies**



NEO-GEO CDZ
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80+ ($147+)**
CD-based Neo-Geo systems, an attempt by SNK to lower the cost of Neo-Geo games. The CDZ is cheaper and has improved loading times. Most CD titles are ports from the AES/MVS.

- VIEWPOINT
- AGGRESSORS OF DARK COMBAT
- SAMURAI SHODOWN RPG



NEO-GEO POCKET (B/W)
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**



NEO-GEO POCKET COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Handheld Neo-Geo systems by SNK that sadly failed to compete with the Game Boy, despite featuring some great games. Still a wonderful little system, though. Be sure to buy the later colour screen model.

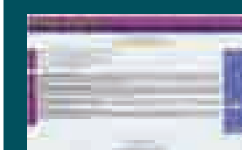
- FASELEI!
- CARD FIGHTERS (CAPCOM/SNK)
- MATCH OF THE MILLENNIUM (CAP VS SNK)

RETRO GAMING SITES

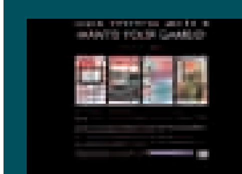
THE BLACK MOON PROJECT
Excellent website that's fully dedicated to the greatly underappreciated CD-i console. There are plenty of great reviews, informative interviews and some interesting articles; all dedicated to one of gaming's most misunderstood machines. Essential reading.
http://blackmoon.classicgaming.gamespy.com



THE DRAGON'S LAIR PROJECT
With several new DS games recently announced, we've found ourselves once again stepping into the *Dragon's Lair*. Dedicated to Don Bluth's animated arcade hit, DLP covers everything you can think of about the classic franchise and also dedicates plenty of space to other Laserdisc titles.
www.dragons-lair-project.com



ACORN ELECTRON WORLD
Quite possibly the most comprehensive Acorn site we've ever stumbled across. There's a staggering amount of information available here, ranging from numerous magazine scans to complete walkthroughs of classic Acorn games. If you're an Acorn nut you'll never have to read another site again.
www.acornelectron.co.uk



Special thanks to **www.lofi-gaming.org.uk** who supplied several of our screenshots

ROBOCO



THE MAKING OF…

PUT YOUR WEAPON DOWN AND YOUR HANDS UP AS WE DISCOVER HOW OCEAN CREATED THE FUTURE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT FOR AND 16-BIT COMPUTERS

"Your move creep"

OTHER EXCITING DIRECTIVES…

- If you thought Lara Croft was the only adventurer that Core Design created you've obviously forgotten about the escapades of a certain Rick Dangerous. Shame on you.
- It's one of the most successful games publishers in the world, but what exactly is it that makes Electronic Arts tick? Original founder Trip Hawkins has a few theories…
- Summer may well be months away, but that doesn't mean we can't start warming up now. So stave off the February chill with our in-depth look at the making of Epyx's California Games.

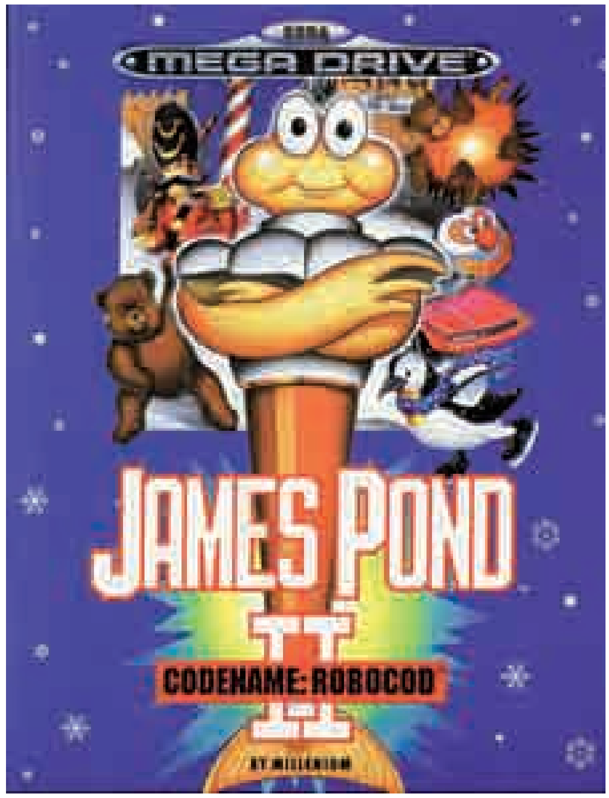
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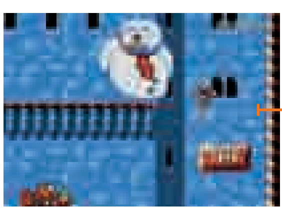


END/GAME

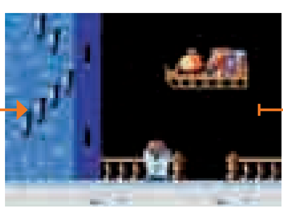


JAMES POND II: ROBOCOD

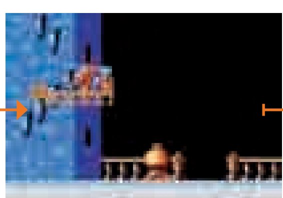
With Dr Maybe filling Santa's toy factory with ticking bombs, only one fish is brave enough to put a stop to the dastardly villain. Let's hope he can fin-ish the job. Ho-ho-ho.



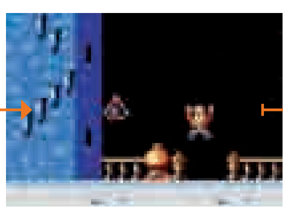
SCREEN 1
Dr Maybe's final boss is a huge snowman who can't wait to turn our little hero into a fishy popsicle. Luckily, while he's large of girth, his attacks are woefully predictable and Robocod soon beats him into submission.



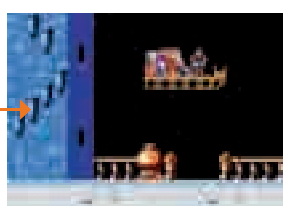
SCREEN 2
The giant snowman is no more, and Dr Maybe finally allows you access to Santa Claus. Interestingly, Santa doesn't seem at all upset about his imprisonment, as he has a smile that's almost as wide as his gut.



SCREEN 3
Take that Dr Maybe. As Santa flies across the screen he drops a huge sack on the evil one's head. Children all around the world suddenly feel a disturbance in the force as a million presents simultaneously break.



SCREEN 4
With Dr Maybe up to his neck in powdery snow and unable to move, Santa and Robocod celebrate like all good videogame characters should – by bouncing up and down. Repeatedly. Forever and ever and ever.



SCREEN 5
With the vast majority of his presents still resting on Dr Maybe's head, Santa heads off with Robocod for a quick holiday in the Caribbean. As they relax and sip tequilas, children the world over break down in tears on Christmas Day.